

CONTRIBUTORS

ARTHUR KOESTLER, author of *Arrival and Departure*, *Thieves in the Night* and other books, is the regular London correspondent of PR.

GEORGE ORWELL, whose *Animal Farm* and *Dickens, Dali and Others* were recently published in this country, is a frequent contributor to PR.

OSCAR HANDLIN is assistant professor of history at Harvard University.

ROBERT WARSHOW, managing editor of *Commentary*, has published reviews and critical articles in the *Nation* and other periodicals.

LOUIS ZUKOFSKY is the author of two volumes of verse. He teaches creative writing at Queens College.

EDITH WEAVER's poems have appeared in *Poetry: a Magazine of Verse*, the *Yale Poetry Review*, and *Cross Section* 1947.

BERTRAM D. WOLFE, author of a study of Diego Rivera, is a well-known left-wing political analyst.

ROBERT GOLDWATER, who is in the art department at Queens College, is the author of *Primitivism in Modern Painting*.

RICHARD CHASE recently received a Guggenheim Fellowship to do a critical work on Melville. He teaches at Connecticut College.

WILLIAM TROY has written frequently for PR; he is on the faculty of the New School for Social Research.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN is a member of the department of romance languages at Columbia.

GERALD SYKES, who is presently at work on a novel, lives in New York. His article in this issue will appear in a volume of essays devoted to Paul Rosenfeld.

DANIEL AARON, whose article on Nathanael West appeared in the January-February 1947 number of PR, teaches at Smith College.

London Letter

DEAR EDITORS,

I am beginning to think that it was a mistake on your part to ask an ex-journalist turned novelist to write this London Letter. A letter of this kind should be a lively medley of fact and comment, steeped in local color, spiced with political gossip and literary chit-chat. The present letter for example should have for its main theme that storm in a tea-cup caused by *Keep Left*, the pamphlet of the Labor Rebels (Crossman, Foot, Mikardo, *et al.*); the riposte of the Executive; and some intelligent comment on the annual Labor Party Conference which, as I am writing, is assembled at Margate. But, though I have tried, I am unable to defend myself against a desperate feeling of the futility and irrelevance of all this; against the conviction that whatever is said at Margate or at the foreign affairs debate in the Commons, or at UNO or UNESCO, has damned little to do with the fate of this country and Europe and the world in general. Once, in the prison of Sevilla, I overheard two guards arguing about whether a condemned man who had fallen ill with appendicitis should be given a milk diet or not; that is the feeling of nightmare against which I am battling in vain.

It seems that, just as certain antinomies of pure reasoning cannot be solved, there are antinomies of political reasoning equally insoluble. In the normal course of life moral and political dilemmas occur in such a diluted state that, helped by habit and convention, we do not even realize having made an implicit choice. But in the decisive moments in the history of individuals and nations, the dilemma presents itself in an undiluted and explicit form. In the case of this country, the dilemma is of course between East and West, capitalist democracy or state-capitalist totalitarianism, America and Russia. To you, this is obvious. To the people in this country, it is not. They still believe that it is possible to escape the horns. Hence that touch of futility and staleness about all recent political discussions, whether they refer to Henry Wallace's visit, or *Keep Left*, or the sick man of the Kremlin.

To embark on a tirade against British complacency, escapism, ostrich policy, the philosophy of muddling through, would mean begging the question. For me, a continental socialist living in England, the choice is easy and obvious. For you, ditto. There is no need for me to recapitu-

late to PR readers the reasons for the certitude that, if Russia succeeded in driving a wedge between England and America, our civilization would be lost. Nor that the last, faint, flickering hope of avoiding war within the next fifteen years lies in collective security against the only potential aggressor. But the English Laborist's outlook is necessarily different. Some of my oldest friends in this country happen to be among the rebel MPs of the Keep Left group; and after some night-long discussions with them I began to wonder whether, if I were in their shoes, my outlook wouldn't be different too. I shall try to list here some of the reasons which make the dilemma almost insoluble for the Englishman—and which drive the British Left to their wild goose chase after a "third way," the chimera of an independent, neutral British policy maneuvering between the two hemispheres.

(a) *The geographical factor.* If the British Isles could be cut loose of their continental moorings and ferried, say, into the Caribbean Sea, the choice would be easy. As it is, the memories of the Blitz, of V-1 and V-2 don't make the prospect of becoming America's aircraft-carrier or atom-bomb absorber particularly enticing. As *The New Statesman* put it with its inimitable naïveté: "Our only hope is that by atomic neutrality we should avoid provoking either side to destroy us as an arsenal or as a base." Logically, this hope is of course moonshine, as the reward of Belgian neutrality in two wars, the example of Holland and Norway, of Finland, the Baltic and Balkan countries, prove. But if you happen to be an Englishman with a family and a house and a garden, you will naturally cling, against logic and reason, to the hope of getting somehow out of the necessity of taking sides. You will remember that England as a target is twenty miles from the Continent but three thousand miles from America. Your cunning subconscious may even whisper to you that in the case of your benevolent neutrality toward Russia, the Americans would hesitate to let loose atom bombs or radio-active clouds against these islands, whereas in the opposite case the Russians would not hesitate to do so. And finally, people here have been told for six years what nice chaps the Russians are, and that Eastern democracy is only just a shade different from ours; so what's it all about anyway, and why get mixed up in other people's quarrels?

I think that if one argues against appeasement one has to take account of these realities. The psychological relation between England and America today is not unlike the relation of France to England between the two wars. The French remembered and resented the fact that in the First World War their country had been devastated while Britain had remained practically untouched. The most effective argument of the French Fifth Column in 1939 was "the British want to fight this war to the last Frenchman." Feeling in this country toward the USA is today much the same.

(b) *The economic factor*. Rightly or wrongly, the average man in this country feels that with the dollar loan the Americans have been pulling a fast one on him. I don't want to go into the merits of the case; the fact is that that is what people feel. "The Americans are guzzling, we are starving; we took the brunt of the Blitz, they are reaping the benefits." This conviction of the man in the street is strengthened by the pro-American Conservative press, all out to prove that capitalism means a world of plenty, Labor rule the opposite. The political projection of this attitude is the fear that an Anglo-American alliance would mean Britain's complete economic dependence on America. Some socialists suspect that Wall Street might put pressure on this country to change its regime; industrialists, frightened by the Red Scare, are possibly even more frightened by the dollar-enslavement; and I have heard intelligent politicians, who are fully aware of the danger of Russian expansion, argue against the standardization of Anglo-American armaments because it might increase British industrial dependence on you.

This leads us to the third point: (c) *the psychological factor*—i.e., that tenacious family ambivalence of feeling between the two nations. It crops up in every review of American films and books; in the painful memories which the conduct of certain sections of the American troops left in this country; in the resentment against American support of the Zionist case, and against the Americans' "butting in" in the Middle East. Memories of gratitude for 1940 are mixed with envy because your continent is rich and this island is poor; reluctant admiration is combined with the highbrow's contempt for your lack of traditions, and the socialist's almost mystical horror of American Big Business—compared to which GPU rule appears to be a paternally benevolent regime.

So far I have only spoken of the average Englishman without particular sympathies for Russia. Obviously the factors I have mentioned form a solid psychological foundation on which Communists and fellow-travelers can build. As the psychology of the fellow-traveler has been repeatedly discussed in these columns I don't intend to go once more over familiar ground; merely to point out some more recent, additional symptoms in the European variant of this mental epidemic:

(1) *The soul-searching attitude*. This is particularly frequent among the left intelligentsia here and in France, and may be summed up as follows:

"You say the Russians deport people, censor their newspapers and are not quite up to ideal humanitarian standards. This may or may not be so—it is so difficult to get at undistorted facts—but even granted that some of these things happen, who am I to get indignant about them while my own country condones the persecution of Greek socialists, throws tear-gas at the survivors of Belsen, fraternizes with Franco, etc.,

etc.? And what about Chiang Kai-shek and Indo-China, and the Negroes in America, and the oppressed minorities in Iceland and Patagonia? Charity begins at home; cast out the beam of thine own eye ere thou lookest at the mote in thy brother's . . ."—and so on and so forth. The answer is of course that if we had adopted this attitude in 1933 there would have been no antifascist movement; Britain would have had no right to make war on the Nazis under a reactionary Tory leadership, and for reasons of moral honesty should have accepted Gestapo rule.

(2) *The anti-anti attitude.* "Granted that Stalinism is a Bad Thing, its opponents are even worse. What are your alternatives to Communism? In France—de Gaulle. In Italy—the Vatican. In America—Big Business, Colonel McCormick, the Dies Committee. I don't like Stalin's methods, but I shall never, never join in that witch-hunt. Anti-Communism is the cloak for disguised fascists. Your personal motives for writing anti-Communist stuff may be sincere or not, I don't know, but how do you feel when the reactionary press splashes your stuff and welcomes you to their camp? The company you keep stinks. I am not a Communist, but I am an anti-anti-Communist. Maybe if we had a Communist dictatorship they would put me into a concentration camp for some deviation—still, I would prefer to be in a Communist jail to being free under a de Gaulle regime. . . ."

This last remark is a textual quotation of what a well-known French poet said to me after getting very tight and very sincere. I said: "So you yourself recognize that under a de Gaulle regime of the Kemalist type you could after all go on publishing your stuff within limits, whereas under the Communists you couldn't. Then in the name of what principle do you prefer the Communist jail to Gaullist restricted freedom?" He answered, with complete sincerity: "In the name of what principle, you ask? *Mais mon pauvre ami, au nom de la liberté!*"

You American radicals are perhaps not fully conscious of this desperate dilemma of the European Left. For you the choice is much easier: it lies between totalitarianism and the continuation of capitalist democracy, progressing and regressing on a wavy but fairly continuous curve. But in most countries of Europe this organic curve has been cut with an axe, and the branches from the stump tend to grow toward the extreme right or left.

(3) *The comforts of sitting between two stools.* This brings us back to the left wing of the British Labor Party. As the only socialist party in Europe with an absolute parliamentary majority and safely in power for at least another three years, the dilemma for them is not one of internal policy, but projected onto a global scale. I have alluded to some of the very sound reasons which make the Left here reluctant to make a final choice between Russia and the USA. These negative reasons must of course be complemented by at least a pretense of a positive program for

a "third way." Alas, it is no more than a pretense. What remained of the Socialist International was discreetly buried last year at the Bournemouth Conference; and the program to oppose the tide of Communist expansion and infiltration by some sort of social-democratic revival, independently of American economic and strategic backing, without de Gaulle, without the various shades of Christian Democratic parties (which, if it comes to a show-down, are of course always on the side of reaction)—such a program sounds very good in an idealistic speech from a Labor back-bencher, but has about as much bearing on reality as the pious exhortations to "outlaw" the atom bomb.

But while the idealistic back-bencher at least believes in his own rhetoric, the realistic Stalinites reap the benefits. For they know that, as this country is not "ripe" to make a choice openly for Russia and against America, the best way to prolong the power-vacuum to the west of the Russian bloc, to keep western Europe defenseless and disunited, is to proclaim an independent British policy, Britain's mission as a "mediator" between East and West, and so on.

I suppose this is a rather depressing letter. Its aim was not to propose solutions, but to point out some of the factors which prevent those countries where humanist tradition still survives, from sticking together against the menace of the most ruthless tyranny in the history of man. And also, to point once more to a curious characteristic of our time: that the most dangerous propagators of this vileness and mental corruption are neither cynics nor terrorists with bombs—but men of good will, with strong frustrations and feeble brains: the wishful thinkers and idealistic moral cowards, the fellow-travelers of the death train. Like a swarm of gentle rodents, they are gnawing, gnawing away at the roots in the scorched fields.

ARTHUR KOESTLER

THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM: IV

Toward European Unity

GEORGE ORWELL

A SOCIALIST today is in the position of a doctor treating an all but hopeless case. As a doctor, it is his duty to keep the patient alive, and therefore to assume that the patient has at least a chance of recovery. As a scientist, it is his duty to face the facts, and therefore to admit that the patient will probably die. Our activities as socialists only have meaning if we assume that socialism *can* be established, but if we stop to consider what probably *will* happen, then we must admit, I think, that the chances are against us. If I were a bookmaker, simply calculating the probabilities and leaving my own wishes out of account, I would give odds against the survival of civilization within the next few hundred years. As far as I can see, there are three possibilities ahead of us:

1. That the Americans will decide to use the atomic bomb while they have it and the Russians haven't. This would solve nothing. It would do away with the particular danger that is now presented by the USSR, but would lead to the rise of new empires, fresh rivalries, more wars, more atomic bombs, etc. In any case this is, I think, the least likely outcome of the three, because a preventive war is a crime not easily committed by a country that retains any traces of democracy.

2. That the present "cold war" will continue until the USSR, and several other countries, have atomic bombs as well. Then there will only be a short breathing-space before whizz! go the rockets, wallop! go the bombs, and the industrial centers of the world are wiped out, probably beyond repair. Even if any one state, or group of states, emerges from such a war as technical victor, it will probably be unable to build up the machine civilization anew. The world, therefore, will once again be inhabited by a few million, or a few hundred million human beings living by subsistence agriculture, and probably, after a couple of generations, retaining no more of the culture of the past than a knowledge of how to smelt metals. Conceivably this is a desirable outcome, but obviously it has nothing to do with socialism.

3. That the fear inspired by the atomic bomb and other weapons yet to come will be so great that everyone will refrain from using them. This seems to me the worst possibility of all. It would mean the division of the world among two or three vast superstates, unable to conquer one another and unable to be overthrown by any internal rebellion. In all probability their structure would be hierarchic, with a semidivine caste at the top and outright slavery at the bottom, and the crushing out of liberty would exceed anything that the world has yet seen. Within each state the necessary psychological atmosphere would be kept up by complete severance from the outer world, and by a continuous phony war against rival states. Civilizations of this type might remain static for thousands of years.

Most of the dangers that I have outlined existed and were foreseeable long before the atomic bomb was invented. The only way of avoiding them that I can imagine is to present somewhere or other, on a large scale, the spectacle of a community where people are relatively free and happy and where the main motive in life is not the pursuit of money or power. In other words, democratic socialism must be made to work throughout some large area. But the only area in which it could conceivably be made to work, in any near future, is western Europe. Apart from Australia and New Zealand, the tradition of democratic socialism can only be said to exist—and even there it only exists precariously—in Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Switzerland, the Low Countries, France, Britain, Spain, and Italy. Only in those countries are there still large numbers of people to whom the word “socialism” has some appeal and for whom it is bound up with liberty, equality, and internationalism. Elsewhere it either has no foothold or it means something different. In North America the masses are contented with capitalism, and one cannot tell what turn they will take when capitalism begins to collapse. In the USSR there prevails a sort of oligarchical collectivism which could only develop into democratic socialism against the will of the ruling minority. Into Asia even the word “socialism” has barely penetrated. The Asiatic nationalist movements are either fascist in character, or look toward Moscow, or manage to combine both attitudes: and at present all movements among the colored peoples are tinged by racial mysticism. In most of South America the position is essentially similar, so is it in Africa and the Middle East. Socialism does not exist anywhere, but even as an idea it is at present valid only in Europe. Of course, socialism cannot properly be said to be established until it is world-wide, but

the process must begin somewhere, and I cannot imagine it beginning except through the federation of the western European states, transformed into socialist republics without colonial dependencies. Therefore a socialist United States of Europe seems to me the only worth-while political objective today. Such a federation would contain about 250 million people, including perhaps half the skilled industrial workers of the world. I do not need to be told that the difficulties of bringing any such thing into being are enormous and terrifying, and I will list some of them in a moment. But we ought not to feel that it is of its nature impossible, or that countries so different from one another would not voluntarily unite. A western European union is in itself a less improbable concatenation than the Soviet Union or the British Empire.

Now as to the difficulties. The greatest difficulty of all is the apathy and conservatism of people everywhere, their unawareness of danger, their inability to imagine anything new—in general, as Bertrand Russell put it recently, the unwillingness of the human race to acquiesce in its own survival. But there are also active malignant forces working against European unity, and there are existing economic relationships on which the European peoples depend for their standard of life and which are not compatible with true socialism. I list what seem to me to be the four main obstacles, explaining each of them as shortly as I can manage:

1. Russian hostility. The Russians cannot but be hostile to any European union not under their own control. The reasons, both the pretended and the real ones, are obvious. One has to count, therefore, with the danger of a preventive war, with the systematic terrorizing of the smaller nations, and with the sabotage of the Communist parties everywhere. Above all there is the danger that the European masses will continue to believe in the Russian myth. As long as they believe it, the idea of a socialist Europe will not be sufficiently magnetic to call forth the necessary effort.

- 2 American hostility. If the United States remains capitalist, and especially if it needs markets for exports, it cannot regard a socialist Europe with a friendly eye. No doubt it is less likely than the USSR to intervene with brute force, but American pressure is an important factor because it can be exerted most easily on Britain, the one country in Europe which is outside the Russian orbit. Since 1940 Britain has kept its feet against the European dictators at the expense of becoming almost a dependency of the USA. Indeed,

Britain can only get free of America by dropping the attempt to be an extra-European power. The English-speaking Dominions, the colonial dependencies, except perhaps in Africa, and even Britain's supplies of oil, are all hostages in American hands. Therefore there is always the danger that the United States will break up any European coalition by drawing Britain out of it.

3. Imperialism. The European peoples, and especially the British, have long owed their high standard of life to direct or indirect exploitation of the colored peoples. This relationship has never been made clear by official socialist propaganda, and the British worker, instead of being told that, by world standards, he is living above his income, has been taught to think of himself as an overworked, down-trodden slave. To the masses everywhere "socialism" means, or at least is associated with, higher wages, shorter hours, better houses, all-round social insurance, etc., etc. But it is by no means certain that we can afford these things if we throw away the advantages we derive from colonial exploitation. However evenly the national income is divided up, if the income as a whole falls, the working-class standard of living must fall with it. At best there is liable to be a long and uncomfortable reconstruction period for which public opinion has nowhere been prepared. But at the same time the European nations *must* stop being exploiters abroad if they are to build true socialism at home. The first step toward a European socialist federation is for the British to get out of India. But this entails something else. If the United States of Europe is to be self-sufficient and able to hold its own against Russia and America, it must include Africa and the Middle East. But that means that the position of the indigenous peoples in those countries must be changed out of recognition—that Morocco or Nigeria or Abyssinia must cease to be colonies or semicolonies and become autonomous republics on a complete equality with the European peoples. This entails a vast change of outlook and a bitter, complex struggle which is not likely to be settled without bloodshed. When the pinch comes the forces of imperialism will turn out to be extremely strong, and the British worker, if he has been taught to think of socialism in materialistic terms, may ultimately decide that it is better to remain an imperial power at the expense of playing second fiddle to America. In varying degrees all the European peoples, at any rate those who are to form part of the proposed union, will be faced with the same choice.

4. The Catholic Church. As the struggle between East and West becomes more naked, there is danger that democratic socialists and

mere reactionaries will be driven into combining in a sort of Popular Front. The Church is the likeliest bridge between them. In any case the Church will make every effort to capture and sterilize any movement aiming at European unity. The dangerous thing about the Church is that it is *not* reactionary in the ordinary sense. It is not tied to laissez-faire capitalism or to the existing class system, and will not necessarily perish with them. It is perfectly capable of coming to terms with socialism, or appearing to do so, provided that its own position is safeguarded. But if it is allowed to survive as a powerful organization, it will make the establishment of true socialism impossible, because its influence is and always must be against freedom of thought and speech, against human equality, and against any form of society tending to promote earthly happiness.

When I think of these and other difficulties, when I think of the enormous mental readjustment that would have to be made, the appearance of a socialist United States of Europe seems to me a very unlikely event. I don't mean that the bulk of the people are not prepared for it, in a passive way. I mean that I see no person or group of persons with the slightest chance of attaining power and at the same time with the imaginative grasp to see what is needed and to demand the necessary sacrifices from their followers. But I also can't at present see any other hopeful objective. At one time I believed that it might be possible to form the British Empire into a federation of socialist republics, but if that chance ever existed, we lost it by failing to liberate India, and by our attitude toward the colored peoples generally. It may be that Europe is finished and that in the long run some better form of society will arise in India or China. But I believe that it is only in Europe, if anywhere, that democratic socialism could be made a reality in short enough time to prevent the dropping of the atom bombs.

Of course, there are reasons, if not for optimism, at least for suspending judgment on certain points. One thing in our favor is that a major war is not likely to happen immediately. We could, I suppose, have the kind of war that consists in shooting rockets, but not a war involving the mobilization of tens of millions of men. At present any large army would simply melt away, and that may remain true for ten or even twenty years. Within that time some unexpected things might happen. For example, a powerful socialist movement might for the first time arise in the United States. In England it is now the fashion to talk of the United States as "capi-

talistic," with the implication that this is something unalterable, a sort of racial characteristic like the color of eyes or hair. But in fact it cannot be unalterable, since capitalism itself has manifestly no future, and we cannot be sure in advance that the next change in the United States will not be a change for the better.

Then, again, we do not know what changes will take place in the USSR if war can be staved off for the next generation or so. In a society of that type, a radical change of outlook always seems unlikely, not only because there can be no open opposition but because the regime, with its complete hold over education, news, etc., deliberately aims at preventing the pendulum swing between generations which seems to occur naturally in liberal societies. But for all we know the tendency of one generation to reject the ideas of the last is an abiding human characteristic which even the NKVD will be unable to eradicate. In that case there may by 1960 be millions of young Russians who are bored by dictatorship and loyalty parades, eager for more freedom, and friendly in their attitude toward the West.

Or again, it is even possible that if the world falls apart into three unconquerable superstates, the liberal tradition will be strong enough within the Anglo-American section of the world to make life tolerable and even offer some hope of progress. But all this is speculation. The actual outlook, so far as I can calculate the probabilities, is very dark, and any serious thought should start out from that fact .

The Child Is the Meaning of This Life*

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

DURING THE YEARS of the depression each person of the family slowly accepted his own life, the deprivations, the comforts, consolations, and substitutes, and the wasting defenses with which they coped with their own desires and weaknesses. As Seymour accepted his job which made it necessary for him to climb apartment house stairs, so James accepted his wife's family, and Rebecca, who always accepted everything, accepted the violent temper of her husband and the fact that he talked too much, that he made speeches about international politics at the dinner table, boring everyone and appalling visitors with the mannerisms he had learned through a correspondence school course on elocution some twenty years in the past. She knew that James also repelled many of his patients and lost them by orating to them as they sat in the dentist's chair, awaited pain, and with stuffed mouths listened like mutes to his theories and opinions. Sarah too accepted her husband's departure and as Seymour no longer believed in his luck, so she no longer believed that he would return to her and the children. The children were growing up and both were in high school. Jasper was a good student, but he was a difficult boy who read books all the time and did not go out to play like the other boys. Nancy was more difficult in one respect, she liked the boys too much and she went with the fast crowd at high school. Nothing had ever made Sarah as angry as the possibility of Nancy's promiscuity. Nancy denied all under her mother's questioning and she told her mother that she knew very well how to take care of herself. Sarah did not understand the deep-sea necking—the term used by Nancy's friends—in which her daughter indulged, for in Sarah's youth the relations of boys and girls had been less open and less discussed.

"Nowadays the girls of today will do anything," a friend of Sarah's had told her.

Sarah had brooded about this report. She felt, however, that Nancy would not be able to lie to her if she had actually had a serious love affair and permitted some boy to have his way with her.

* Continued from the last issue.

"Mother, in a technical sense I am absolutely innocent," said Nancy to her mother, smiling about the innocence she meant, which was the preservation of her virginity. "Nowadays if you don't pet, the boys drop you."

Sarah remained perplexed, although appeased. The resentment she felt when Nancy went out with a young man in a car was so great that only by preventing Nancy from going out at all could she have freed herself of this feeling. Since every effort to keep Nancy at home in the evening merely made her disappear during the afternoon, or return late from school, Sarah accepted her own harsh resentment. And she blamed her husband, she said that Nancy was just like her father, and she supposed that the love which existed between Nancy and her father was based on the fact that both were so much interested in the act of making love.

Rebecca tried to explain to her sister that anyone could see that Nancy was the kind of a girl who would not get into trouble, she was adequate to every situation, she just wanted to have a good time like everyone else. But the mere fact that it was Rebecca's explanation sufficed to prevent it from being plausible to Sarah, even if it had not been insufficient for other reasons.

"If you had a daughter," said Sarah, "you would feel like I do."

Rebecca's boy, John, was growing up too and Sarah pointed out to her sister that she was spoiling him in the way that she had tried to spoil Sarah's children when she was an unmarried aunt.

"He is not in good health," said Rebecca who was very sensitive about John, "you have to be careful with an ailing child. You know that he has convulsions."

Meanwhile Seymour's relationship with John was exactly what it had been to Nancy and Jasper when they were still children, and although John did not respond to Seymour's teasing as fully as the sensitive Jasper had, still it was a comfort to Seymour to have a child to tell jokes to, to send on errands, to make fun of, and to teach about major league baseball. As Jasper went forward in high school, he began to read books of which Seymour did not approve. For a time uncle and nephew had had a common interest in O. Henry and Irvin S. Cobb, but when Jasper began at fifteen to read the fiction of Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis, Seymour was troubled.

"God knows what is going to become of that boy," said Seymour, "if he reads any more, he will turn out to be some kind of freak."

On the other hand, Seymour took pride in Jasper's precocity, and bragged to his friends about his nephew's learning, exaggerating

the extent of this learning because of the intensity of his family pride. Jasper heard of his uncle's esteem by accident, when one of his uncle's cronies asked him whether he really was interested in reading dry books. And Jasper was surprised, for he had never had a word of praise from Seymour. But then when Seymour became angry with Jasper because Jasper refused to get him cigars, he attacked his nephew for reading what he did.

"You're going to land in jail one of these days," said Seymour, "reading all these red magazines."

Jasper was astounded and it took some time for him to make out that what Seymour had in mind was the copy of *The New Republic* he had glanced at in his nephew's bedroom. After the quarrel was over, Jasper sought in vain to explain to Seymour that *The New Republic* was liberal and not socialist in politics. But Seymour regarded this as a sophistical distinction.

"All those guys," he said, "are just sore because they are not rich. Give any one of them a million dollars and they would forget all about being reds."

And when Jasper argued in vain that socialism was not a question of personal resentment, but of altering the economic system, Seymour announced as if he had discovered the thought that it was impossible to change human nature. These discussions occurred during the worst years of the depression and Jasper told his mother too that the remedy would be a different social order. Sarah said that if what Jasper said was true, then capitalism would not have lasted so long. It was useless for Jasper to remind his mother of the panics and crashes which had recurred in her lifetime, for she remembered chiefly that they had ended and prosperity had returned.

"Most people have to admit that something is wrong," said Jasper to his mother, repeating an argument he had read. But Sarah was unwilling to believe that the depression was not going to end soon. And she thought her son was obviously wrong when he said that was the result of the competition for profits. Sarah knew that human beings are always fighting with one another and some men are just evil. Her husband was a good example. She had compared her husband to the Kaiser more than once. She was also disturbed because she felt that Jasper was turning out in the way that the lunatic fringe of her youth had turned out, loafers and good-for-nothings who talk parlor socialism and do not earn a living.

Michael was given his divorce by Sarah in the first year of the depression. He had immediately married again and he had died two

years after his second marriage, a fact which Sarah regarded as a personal vindication.

"If he had stayed with his wife and children," she often said, "he would be alive today."

Michael's estate was believed to be one of considerable wealth, and Seymour as much as anyone was interested in how much money Nancy and Jasper were going to inherit. He discussed tirelessly with Jasper what might be done with the money which he was going to get when he was twenty-one years of age. The lawyers for the estate tried to suggest to Sarah that the general collapse of values was such that the estate had merely a paper value, apart from some of the stocks and bonds, and even the stocks and bonds might never return to their value in the heyday of the bull market. Seymour told Jasper that this was foolish, and he said that whatever went down must eventually go up, it was like bouncing a ball. Jasper believed that this was true, because he wanted to believe it was true, despite his acquaintance with the radical political and economic theory. And the whole family believed that Nancy and Jasper would be rich heirs, for this belief had lived in the family for many years and it was too pleasant to yield to any acquaintance with reality.

In 1937 Seymour made the most revolutionary move of his life, he became a bookmaker. It was soon recognized that he should have done this many years before, instead of being the gambler who threw his money away on betting. Seymour did not prosper as a bookmaker might, but he managed to make a living sufficient to keep his mother and himself in modest circumstances, so that at last, twelve years after James first had demanded it, Seymour and his mother lived in a household of their own and James lived alone with his wife and his son. But the two families lived in the same apartment house because Rebecca was unwilling to let her mother go anywhere where she would be unable to take care of her if she became ill. And Ruth Hart was always in Rebecca's apartment, trying to help her, while Seymour used his sister as a kind of banker, giving her his money to put in the bank for him and drawing upon her resources when he was short of funds.

The entire family had now settled in the fixed forms of middle age. James made a modest living, Seymour made a modest living, Nancy and Jasper went to the city universities, the sickly John was now in grammar school, and the generation of the children provided the only unpredictable and unstable processes in the family life. As the new war came nearer, the prosperity of the family became definite

and certain, although modest. And Seymour moved forward as a bookmaker by securing a silent partner who gave him sufficient capital to take as many bets as he felt he dared. The silent partner took half of whatever money Seymour made as a bookmaker and he took none of the risks that Seymour did with the police, who were supposed to stop all professional gambling. Seymour's new ambition was to get a sufficient amount of capital to be free of his silent partner, and then to enjoy the entire amount of the proceeds. But this ambition often seemed out of his reach, because just as his savings accumulated to the five thousand dollars he thought necessary, the bettors made a killing which none could have foreseen and Seymour was back where he started. With the rise in prosperity as the war began in Europe, there was a rise in the amount of money which was available for gambling and all looked well for Seymour until he was taken by the draft. He was just one year too young to be too old for the army, just as the last year of the first World War he had been the right age, and he had not been taken only because the war had ended in November.

Seymour regarded being drafted as a plain catastrophe. He had thought that he would be rejected for physical reasons, but as he said when he returned from his physical examination:

"If you can breathe, you're in."

He went away to Camp Dix, feeling that the nemesis which had hunted him down all his life had now become the whole of society. After his first six weeks of training, during which he visited his mother on every available occasion, he was sent to Texas for further training. He had not been away from his mother an entire night for years before this time and he was afraid that she might die during his absence, a fear equal only to his fear that he himself was going to be killed during the war. In the army, he was popular as a Broadway gambler, his version of his civilian status, and for the first time in his life he had to get up early in the morning whether he liked it or not. But an old injury to his knee provided him with the excuse for sick leave often enough.

His mother, questioned as to whether she missed him, said that she was glad to get rid of him, and although she did feel his absence as a breach of her daily life, nonetheless she accepted his departure with the equanimity with which she had accepted all the chances and changes she had known all her life.

In six months Seymour was discharged because of his poor knee. He returned to the heart of the family in better health than

he had ever been before and full of loud praise of the army and of military training for boys between eighteen and twenty-one. This praise of discipline was a new version of his affirmation of conventional morality. Yet it was also a sign of his enjoyment of good health.

"My whole life would have been different," he said, "if I had only been drafted in the last war! I would have learned to take care of myself!"

Yet his return was marked by a complete surrender to his old way of life, his late mornings, long breakfasts, and the attention of his mother.

"Mamma, let the water in the tub," he said again as soon as he returned and again she waited on him hand and foot. The one habit he retained from the army was that of sitting on his bed and putting on his socks by throwing his legs up. His mother did not like this method and his resistance to her criticism of it was perhaps the only proof that his mother's attention, though initiated by her, required his acceptance.

Seymour returned to being a bookmaker and he prospered with the wartime prosperity. His mother was satisfied. She felt that at last he had become a real man, equal to a man's responsibilities. His shortcomings now were part of a system which provided him and her with a decent living. She had hated gambling until Seymour became a bookmaker, but now she was distressed by the effort made by the city officials to stop gambling, an effort which Seymour evaded by going to one of the suburbs and receiving the calls of the bettors in the house of a friend, who was paid for this privilege and who took Seymour home in the evening in his car. Ruth Hart felt now that the city administration was wrong to try to stop gambling because it was a part of human nature to gamble and when a human being had extra money, he had the right to risk it and enjoy the heady excitement of a bet. There had always been gambling and there would always be gambling, so that it was foolish and irritating that the police made Seymour go out of town.

As he prospered, Seymour's spendthrift habits increased. He liked to eat expensive meals in restaurants and he was not at home for dinner very often. He let his mother give him breakfast, but he preferred to have lunch elsewhere, and when Jasper visited his grandmother one afternoon, his grandmother remarked to him with both pride and irony:

"You see: he is doing me a favor, he is eating the lunch I made for him."

Ruth Hart's health became weaker and she had heart attacks which were serious indeed. Through the years she had had many illnesses and many griefs, until it seemed as if everything had happened to her. She had been bitten by a dog, she had broken her leg on an icy sidewalk, her appendix had been removed and she had suffered the heartbreak of the death of her son. Yet she was cheerful once more as soon as the trial was passed and she rejoiced in her children, her grandchildren, her friends, and the love all felt for her. Bearing in mind how much she had suffered, her daughters said of her that she had more lives than a cat and Seymour said that nothing could kill her.

"How do you manage to live so long?" asked her grandson Jasper who loved her very much and feared the day when she would die.

She explained to him that she knew how to rest. She did not sleep much and she never went to sleep for good until Seymour had returned, but she dozed in the dark, waiting for him.

And then a year after Seymour's return from the army she had the most severe of all her heart attacks. Seymour's behavior became extraordinary. Although he expressed a mocking amusement at all of her behavior when she was well, as soon as she became sick he was sure that she was going to die, this was the long-feared moment, and Seymour, overcome by the emotions he knew when he went to a ball game on which much of his money was staked, became panicky. He walked up and down in the bedroom and then he sat at her bedside, and when the attack was at its worst, he became so sure that she was going to die that he began to moan and refused to stop moaning and would not leave his mother's bedside.

When she was well again, she told her grandson Jasper about Seymour's behavior, speaking with some disdain.

"You should have heard that moaning, Jasper," she said, "he was not like a human being, he was like some animal. I had to tell him to go away, he was making himself such a nuisance."

The truth was that Ruth Hart was touched by her son's terror of her death. But she was ashamed of what to her was unmanly behavior. It was all right for a woman to scream at such times and she herself had screamed more than once at the news of death or disaster. But a man ought not to be like that.

"What will he do when I am dead?" she asked Rebecca. "I think he will go to pieces."

"You are better than a wife," said Rebecca, "that's why Seymour

never married. What wife would take care of him like that? What wife would fix her husband's socks half inside out in the morning so that they would be easy for him to put on?"

The reason that Seymour did not get married was doubtful and complex. It was true that he had never had enough money to get married properly, but for a time it was suggested by family friends that he ought to marry some rich widow, and this seemed to show that it was not merely a question of not making a living, since a marriage for money might have been arranged. And when Sarah asked him once whether he had thought of getting married, he said:

"I never saw anyone I liked well enough who would want to marry me." This un-understood answer had to do with a plump and handsome girl who had lived in the same apartment house and whom Seymour had admired very much from a distance, asking Jasper once if Jasper thought that Thelma did much necking, and becoming pale, as he spoke, so that his nephew saw that he had a crush on Thelma, and observed thenceforward how Seymour avoided Thelma or made believe that he did not know who she was when he passed her on the apartment house stairs.

When Ruth Hart was near her seventy-fifth birthday, Rebecca decided to give her a surprise party. All the friends who had known her and loved her so many years were excited by the idea of the party, though some said that it might not be wise to make it a surprise, for she was such a nervous person. But Rebecca wanted to make it a surprise party because she liked surprises.

It was the first celebration of a birthday which had occurred for Ruth Hart since she was nineteen years of age, the year that she was married. Even Rebecca, who knew her mother was loved, was surprised by the spontaneous delight the idea of the party evoked in all who were invited, and she was astonished outside of her own view of the limitations of human goodness by the queries about what kind of gift her mother would like and the desire to give her a gift which was not inexpensive, so that the cost of the present would demonstrate the feeling about her. As the preparations for the party went forward there was a competition among the prosperous friends to be the one who gave the most handsome gift. And the poor and the old, being without sufficient funds, wanted to bake the cakes they baked best for the party.

Seymour consented to be present at the party, even though for years he had hidden in the bedroom to avoid the friends of the

family, and this too astonished Rebecca. Sarah too was touched by the extraordinary affection which everyone showed toward her mother. But she was also critical.

"It's just because she never knocks anyone," said Sarah, "she has a good word for everyone. She does not admit to herself what she thinks about them most of the time."

The morning that the party was to occur Rebecca arose early, as her mother might have, to prepare the party food. When Ruth came from the first floor of the apartment house, where she lived, to the fourth-floor apartment where her daughter lived, to make her habitual morning visit and see that all was well with her daughter's family, Rebecca came to the door and would not let her mother come in. She said she was taking a bath. Ruth went downstairs and by the time the elevator had reached the first floor, she knew that her daughter's refusal to admit her was very strange, since the reason given was unheard-of, her daughter had taken many baths in her presence, this was the first time in her life that Rebecca had been squeamish about her mother's presence or refused her admission to her house.

It took an hour for Ruth to decide that Rebecca was trying to conceal something from her and she felt that all concealment was concealment of evil, she had never known anyone to have a reason for concealing goodness.

Seymour had been told to keep his mother from visiting her daughter's apartment, but he had not come home that night, a habit which was becoming more and more frequent. He had been told by Rebecca to use any possible subterfuge to keep his mother from coming upstairs to Rebecca and if he had been at home there were countless resources which he had spontaneously made use of through the years to keep his mother near him.

Ruth, having decided that Rebecca was concealing a disaster from her, returned in the elevator to Rebecca's apartment to make sure. When Rebecca sent Sarah to the door, Sarah told her, smiling, that she must not come in, supposing that the smile would be sufficient to reassure her mother. Ruth again went to her own apartment, thought more about her banishment and decided that Seymour had been injured or killed in the accident she long had feared. She returned in the elevator again, was greeted at the door by both Rebecca and Sarah who told her that she could not enter now, but that at three o'clock in the afternoon, she would be welcome.

Ruth demanded to be admitted with passion and anger.

"I have the worst children in the world," she said, and since the mention of three o'clock had convinced her that Seymour's dead body was being prepared for the coffin by an undertaker, she cried out: "Just give me his body and I will never ask you for anything again."

Sarah and Rebecca laughed and said that there was nothing wrong with Seymour, and she was behaving like a child.

"Where is he then?" said Ruth. "He has not come home all night."

Rebecca reminded her of how often Seymour had stayed out all night during the past year and begged her to depart. The laughter of her daughters did not reassure Ruth so much as perplex her.

"Never in my life has anything like this happened: what children! not to let their own mother in the house." And she departed, disgruntled. It still seemed possible to her that Seymour had been injured elsewhere.

By two some of the guests began to arrive and one of them was sent downstairs to entertain Ruth until it was time to bring her to the party. The guest was greeted by Ruth's condemnation of Sarah and Rebecca as the worst children any mother had ever had. During this time Seymour returned for a clean shirt, glanced furtively at the guest, and told his mother not to annoy him when she questioned him about where he had been. Then she told him about being barred from Rebecca's apartment and Seymour remembered that there was to be a surprise party. But he had an appointment elsewhere. He decided to return as soon as possible, and without greeting his mother's guest, who had known him for twenty-five years, he departed once more.

"Let us go and try Rebecca again," said the friend of the family when it was time to go to the party.

"I don't want to see her," said the angered mother. But she went, after she had been urged to make herself pretty, to fix herself up.

When she entered the living room of her daughter's apartment she was confronted by the friends of many years who sang out:

"Happy birthday, dear Ruth, happy birthday, happy birthday!"

At first she was stupefied. Then she understood and greeted them with a child's smile. She was very pleased. But the guests were moved and some began to cry from the strength of the emotion and some started to clap hands—they had not really known how much they admired Ruth—and one of them, moved by the desire to think not only of Ruth, but of such another party, cried out:

"May you live to be a hundred!"

Ruth remarked that she had no doubt the well-wisher had the best intentions in the world, but perhaps it would not be the most pleasant thing to live to be one hundred years of age. However she spoke of her joy in the party and her pleasure that all of them were here. Then all began to present the gifts they had brought for Ruth, and their handsomeness and their expensiveness were such as to make Ruth say, charming, flustered, and astonished: "O, for me? for me?" as if the gifts were too good for her.

Rebecca and Sarah were the last to give their gifts to Ruth. When they did, Sarah asked:

"Who has the worst children in the world?"

"I have the best children in the world," said Ruth graciously.

And then a friend of the family who had known Ruth when her first child was born made a short speech in which she said that of all the human beings she had known, and she had known many, Ruth was the kindest, the most generous, the most devoted, the least selfish.

Hearing this, Sarah remarked to the lady next to her:

"She can live for six months on a compliment! She thinks about it all day long for six months and forgets to eat."

"That has never stopped her from doing what she thought she ought to do," the friend replied.

Sarah, so long critical of her mother, blaming her for her marriage and for Seymour's character, was nonetheless pleased as well as perplexed by the occasion. She knew that there were not many human beings who would be honored with so much sincerity and conviction.

As the party foods were eaten, there were many stories of what had occurred through the years and much laughter, although, in fact, there was little reason for laughter about the events which were recounted.

When the party was almost over and some had departed and most still sat at the dinner table, but no longer ate, partaking of a last cup of tea, Seymour entered hurriedly. He was very embarrassed to see all these people whom he always avoided, and embarrassed most of all by the bouquet of American Beauty roses he had brought for his mother. He gave her the bouquet, kissed her cheek self-consciously, and then departed.

"I have to meet someone at nine o'clock," he said.

"There is a good side to his character," said Ruth, when he had left. "He is not everything that he should be, but he takes care of his

mother, and since he became a bookmaker, he has improved in every way."

And the party ended amid kisses and sincere best wishes, gratitude and a sense that after all there was some goodness in life, after all.

Seymour was forty, his sisters were middle-aged, Nancy was married, and Jasper had begun a legal career. James at sixty-five was what he had always been, and John, Ruth's last grandchild, was in high school, where he made his way painfully because he was a poor student. Nancy had married and moved to San Francisco and had had three children immediately.

"Par for the course," said Seymour to Jasper. "Maybe we ought to send her a booklet about birth control?"

Jasper, returning from Washington where he was a lawyer for one of the New Deal agencies, came to see his grandmother just after the defeat of Germany. Arriving at his grandmother's house at noon, he found Seymour seated at the table in the kitchen in his underwear, being given his breakfast by his mother as he read the newspapers and spotted the page with the yellow drops of his soft-boiled egg.

Jasper greeted the two and went with his grandmother to converse in the living room which now served also as Seymour's bedroom: he had used the studio couch as his bed since his mother was ill, although for a long time it had been Ruth who had slept on the studio couch while Seymour used the bedroom.

Ruth explained this shift to her grandson with some pride.

"You see," she said, "he is really a good son, after all."

"You always look for whatever is good in everyone," said Jasper.

"It is better to be like that," and Ruth, who knew that her grandson suspected the worst of most human beings and felt that he suffered because of this suspiciousness.

Seymour, having concluded his breakfast, entered in his bare feet and underwear and began to dress, as he conversed with Jasper.

"What are the big shots in Washington figuring out now?" he inquired of his nephew of whose presence in Washington he was extremely proud.

"They are figuring out how to keep their jobs and how to get the jobs they have been thinking about," said Jasper.

"I bet they are," said Seymour who approved of such a view of human beings and who liked such observations because they gave him the feeling of being in the know. Meanwhile as he conversed with his

nephew, Seymour threw his legs high in the air, leaning back on the studio couch and drawing on his socks in the way he had learned while a member of the armed forces. His mother went to the closet, took his newly pressed pants from a hanger, and brought them to him. Seymour drew on his pants with care and examined the shirts in the dresser. He complained in an offhand way to his mother because the collars were not starched well by the laundry. Jasper regarded his grandmother. She was watching every move made by Seymour. Seeing his glance, she returned to him and asked him if he wanted a new and handsome necktie which Seymour had purchased, decided he did not like, and then refused to bring back to the haberdashery. Jasper refused the necktie.

"I have enough," he said to his grandmother, although the truth was that Seymour's taste in clothes and men's wear was loud, practically spectacular, so that nothing of his could conceivably be of any use to Jasper.

Jasper regarded his grandmother's scrutiny of his own attire. She took pride in Jasper's success, the only success of the family, and she took much pleasure in his love for her. Yet she felt that he did not look the success that he was and the reason was that he did not dress as he should. She thought that Seymour went too far, perhaps, but Jasper, on the other hand, wore old and unpressed suits.

"He does not look like what he is," she explained once to a neighbor as she introduced him, and thenceforward Jasper made a special effort each time he went to see his grandmother, and when on one such occasion he returned to the apartment of a lady friend she remarked on the fact that his shoes were shined for once.

"What a character you are," she said, "the only time you get your shoes shined is when you go to see your grandmother!"

Jasper had taken the same extraordinary pains on this occasion and he was amused to see that his grandmother looked at him with some disappointment, as before.

She recognized his amused look as having to do with her scrutiny and changed to the subject of Jasper's work.

"You must not work so hard," she said, just as ten years before when he had stayed with her and asked her to wake him in time for school, she had not done so, explaining that she thought that if he was sleepy, he ought to sleep.

Jasper explained as he had many times before that he liked his work.

"Have a good time," she said to him, "there is plenty of time

for work." And she wanted to know when Jasper was going to get married, urging him again to marry a rich girl.

"Don't forget," she said, "it is no crime for a girl to be rich."

"I want to find a girl I like twenty-four hours a day," Jasper said to his grandmother.

"That's right," said Seymour from the bedroom, "women are a tough proposition. You better watch your step, Jasper!"

Seymour returned to the living room, tying his necktie with much effort at the precise effect.

"Love 'em and leave 'em," he said to his nephew, who he supposed was a philanderer just like his father.

Jasper smiled and said, "I don't have much time right now to get very much involved."

"That's right," said Ruth Hart, who had not really understood her son's remark or her grandson's reply, "but remember, you promised me that you were going to give me a grandchild. After all, Nancy is in California, what good does it do me that she has three children, even if she sends me pictures?"

"Don't forget your promise," said Jasper who was pleased more than he knew that his grandmother desired him to have a child.

"What promise?" said his grandmother.

"The promise that you are not going to die until I have the little girl I am going to name after you."

"How long do you think I can wait?" his grandmother said. "I am getting impatient."

"There's always time enough to die," said Jasper, and rose to depart, full of the pleasure, animal and spiritual, which this kind of conversation, often renewed, had given him.

Two weeks after this occasion, Jasper was summoned from Washington. John had written him a special delivery letter in his schoolboy scrawl, John, and not any one else, because Rebecca felt it wise that John should cultivate his successful cousin. The news was of the serious illness of Ruth Hart. "I am sorry to have to upset you," wrote John in words that Rebecca had told him to choose, "but Grandmother is in a serious condition and has gone to the hospital."

Jasper returned to New York and went immediately to the hospital. He arrived at the visiting hours mentioned in the letter, just after two o'clock, and in the waiting room he found Seymour very excited while Rebecca tried to appease him. "Where is the money going to come from?" said Rebecca to Seymour.

"I'll steal the money if I have to," said Seymour, his eyes bulging with anger.

It turned out that instead of placing Ruth in a private room, she had been put in a room with two other patients. The hospital, endowed by charity, had different visiting hours for patients and only the ones in private rooms were able to have visitors at any time during the afternoon. Jasper had been wrongly instructed about the visiting hours and he was unable to visit his grandmother.

"But she is all right now," said Rebecca, "it was just another of those attacks."

Seymour paced up and down, as if he were at a ball game, betting. The other visitors regarded the scene with curiosity, for Seymour had shouted and Rebecca had shouted back at him. She explained to Jasper that there was just no money to pay for a private room.

"I will pay my share," she explained, "but Seymour has no money now."

"I told you," said Seymour, "I will borrow it."

"Anyway," said Rebecca to Jasper, "she is feeling much better and she would be all right at home where I could take care of her. But Jasper, that night when I sat up with her because we could not find any hospital that would take us, that night I wished she would die, she was suffering so much."

Seymour departed to borrow money so that his mother might have a private room, and Jasper conversed with his aunt about his grandmother, hearing how afraid she had become because she had supposed, such was the severity of the attack, that she was about to die.

"She gets scared," said Rebecca, "and that is worse for her than anything else, she gets so panicky."

It was too late to change Ruth's room now, a nurse explained to aunt and nephew, who decided to go back to Rebecca's apartment and wait until the evening when patients in semiprivate wards were permitted visitors. They returned in a streetcar, although Jasper wanted to take a taxi, and when they were at the apartment, Jasper was given lunch. He had not wanted to eat at noon because of fear that his grandmother was going to die. And as Jasper ate and as his aunt conversed with him and as the afternoon waned, Jasper heard again from his aunt the long story of the family. Each such recital brought back incidents Jasper had not known about and he felt the glare of discovery, the understanding of events and relationships he had long misunderstood

or been ignorant about. Fresh light, new light, light breaking through the massy cumulus clouds—so Jasper felt as he listened, questioning Rebecca. Before this, he had known Sarah's version, most of all, and now, hearing Rebecca's version of Sarah, Jasper knew for the first time what the two sisters had been to each other.

"What a strong human being is Mamma," said Rebecca, "even the doctor was surprised. He said that most human beings would have died from an attack like that."

"I bet that it is because she really does not want to die that she has lived through so much suffering," said Jasper. "Look at my mother. She has been sick for years in a way that Grandmother was never sick. And yet she has taken better care of herself than Grandmother ever did and she is twenty-five years younger."

"Your mother," said Rebecca, "did not have a good husband and your grandmother did."

The conversation turned to the marriage of Jasper's parents, which he had often discussed with his grandmother as well as his aunt. Jasper explained to his aunt that he had been told by a physician that he had probably had a very unpleasant infancy. He knew well enough that his childhood had been made unpleasant by his sorrow for his mother.

"This doctor thinks that I was sick," said Jasper, who had remarked to friends of his own generation that he had been born with a hangover, the colic.

"You were a fat healthy infant," said Rebecca, "you just had the usual ailments."

"I thought I cried all the time and that that was why we moved from one apartment to another so many times," said Jasper.

"You cried like any child in the cradle," said Rebecca. "The only thing was that your father was crazy about you and when you cried at night, he insisted on turning on all the lights. When a child cries, most people let it cry until it falls asleep. But you found out that you could get a lot of attention by crying and that spoiled you."

This was a new thing to Jasper. He had not known that it was his father and not his mother who made much of him in his infancy.

"I thought my mother spoiled me too," said Jasper.

"It was your father," said Rebecca, "your mother was so miserable about her marriage that she did not pay much attention to you."

This was like a sudden great light in the midst of darkness to Jasper. He had always supposed that his mother, rejected by his unfaithful father, had been devoted to him until he had grown to

be an adolescent critical of her. And he had thought that his sorrow and pity for his mother's unhappiness began with the love his mother had fixed upon him as an infant. Now that he saw that this was not true, he saw his own being and character in an utterly reversed form. He had really loved his mother very much and that was the reason he had felt so much sorrow for her unhappiness. His mother had never loved him and that was why he had sought vainly to be in love. The girls who had been in love with him and whom he had thought of marrying were too easy, they did not reject him, they did not turn away from him, as his mother had. And it had been his father who had really loved him! Who had turned on all the lights when he cried and satisfied every wish of the child! More and more memories of early childhood returned and Jasper saw how his father's departure from his mother must have been a great loss to the small boy who was used to being a little king. His father had loved him as Seymour had been loved by his mother.

"Your father thought there was nothing like you in the whole world!" said Rebecca. "I have never seen a man make so much of a child! That's why your mother always thought he would come back to her, no matter how often he went off with other women."

"And that was why she never cared very much for me," said Jasper, repeating what his aunt had said as he understood it more and more, "I was the hope that disappointed her most of all."

"That's what has been wrong with all of us," said Rebecca, "we expect too much from our children. Everyone knows that we expect everything from them which we never had anywhere else. It is time to go to the hospital. Your grandmother will be waiting for you."

As Jasper returned to the hospital, the history of his family arose, illuminated, in his mind, as if he had entered a house at night and turned on the light in each room, and looked at the things which had long been there, but which he saw as if for the first time. Seymour was what he was because of his mother, because he was his mother's child. Yet Rebecca also was what she was because she had the same mother. At the same time, Sarah was the kind of woman and wife and mother she had turned out to be because her mother and her father had liked their other children more; that was the reason for her being a grasping being, turned in on herself and incapable of love. And Nancy, turning from such a mother, had hurried to marriage, just as Rebecca, having a different mother, had waited long for marriage. As for John, it was too soon to see what kind of a human being he was, but one could be sure that his being as a child would

be the beginning and perhaps the end of whatever he was. And Jasper himself knew now in himself that he looked at the adult world as he had had to look at his mother, suspicious, rejected, ambitious to win more than most human beings desired. What was the freedom to which the adult human being rose in the morning, if each act was held back or inspired by the overpowering ghost of a little child? This freedom seemed to Jasper like the freedom, dangerous, dark, and far-off, to become the father of new children without knowing at all what would become of them, what kind of human beings they would be.

As he entered the hospital room, Jasper saw that his grandmother was exchanging witticisms with the old ladies who were patients. She was overwhelmed to see him and she began to cry while Jasper felt a paralysis of face, so strong was the shock at how shrunken and yellow his grandmother looked.

Ruth Hart introduced the grandson in whom she took so much pride to the other old ladies, who seemed skeptical, for Jasper looked youthful and he did not have the appearance of a successful lawyer.

"I am all right now," said Ruth to her grandson, when she had recognized the fear on his face. "I am going to live for a long time."

Jasper sat by the bedside and held his grandmother's shrunken hand, which had the look and the feel of a chicken's neck. He held her hand as if this were a way of keeping her from departing from his life.

"Don't forget," said Jasper, "you are not supposed to die until I make you a great-grandmother again."

"When will that be?" asked his grandmother, thinking that perhaps Jasper had at last chosen a bride. "Make it soon."

"I will bring some of the girls I know to see you," said Jasper, "and you can tell me which one you like best."

"I must make myself pretty for them," said Ruth Hart, "you must wait until I feel better."

"You are pretty enough as you are," said Jasper.

"I must show them what a fine grandmother you have," said Ruth Hart.

"They don't have to like you," said Jasper, "you have to like them. That's what I will tell them. You tell me which one is most like you and I will marry her."

"She does not have to be like me," said Ruth, although she was flattered, "she just has to be a good girl with some money, a good rich girl and then you will be able to have children soon."

The nurse entered, bearing a tray and announcing that visiting hours were over. Jasper kissed his grandmother, promising to come tomorrow.

As he left the hospital and looked at the clear sky, sparkling with stars, he said to himself.

"The child is the mystery of this life. And the child is the meaning of this life. But the child may be Sarah, Rebecca, Seymour, Nancy, John, or myself. Or he may be my grandmother again, but it is not very likely."

"Do you have a light?" asked a middle-aged man who was also waiting for a taxi and holding a brand-new cigar in his mouth.

"No, I have no light," said Jasper.

INSTEAD OF FLOWERS

Cutting across the prow
of the ferry, a green tug
(Shamrock Towing Co.), from
behind which a rope almost

Dragging the water connects
to a Cherokee red barge
with a cargo, hill high, of
tin cans, the labels

(Most of them) washed off
to let the morning
sunlight glisten on their
silvery cylindrical sides

FRED R. MILLER

In the Dark Backward

OSCAR HANDLIN

HE WHO LOOKS into the dark backward, confidently exploring the whole abysm of time and bringing forth reassuring advice as to the future, commands attention today. When, as in the case of Toynbee's *Study of History*,* these tidings are delivered in a many-volumed work rich in the outward manifestations of scholarship and a seemingly encyclopedic mastery of the facts, the weak voice of criticism is stilled and reviewers deliver the ultimate accolade

Yet we know the dangers of the encyclopedia. All knowledge, it is true, may be found therein, and there, in addition, is also the most formal and most absolute order: A's before B's before C's in rigid rank without deviation. But the order is a falsehood for it is imposed by a previous and arbitrary decision of the contriver. Whatever virtue may inhere in any part, the whole will add nothing, and, treated as a whole, will only mislead.

Arnold J. Toynbee's study of history contains many passages of individual worth, eloquent, imaginative, rich in insight. But they are built into a structure of ideas faulty in conception and development, a structure in which the attractiveness of some of the parts serves only to conceal the risks of the whole.

Toynbee takes pains to establish the validity of his scheme. Almost two hundred pages of the first volume go to mark out the proper unit of historical study. The point of departure is modern Britain; the proof is demonstration that the history of England is not intelligible without reference to influences from without its borders. Examining the range of those contacts and influences, Toynbee finds they are contained within a geographical and chronological entity, Western Christendom. That entity he calls a civilization. An analysis of the main lines of development of this civilization and of the Hellenic from which it descends yields a list of attributes descriptive of the

* Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vols. I-III (London, 1934), Vols. IV-VI (London, 1939), Vols. I-VI abridged by D. C. Somervell (New York, 1947).

stages of growth. A running survey of universal history then reveals nineteen other units which possess those attributes, and which therefore are also civilizations.

Definition of a civilization in terms of the intelligible field of study is deceptive. The process is circular and tautological. One need only shift the point of departure in either time or space to arrive at different limits. A Spaniard or Sicilian looking backward, or any thirteenth-century European looking about him, would by identical criteria be compelled to include as an essential part of Western civilization the world of Islam here excluded. Indeed, Toynbee will himself shortly face difficulties of contradiction, the shadow of which already falls across Volume VI. The plan of the unpublished portions of the work shows there are yet to come two sections on the contacts of civilizations in time and space. But if these entities influence each other in a meaningful manner, are they any more understandable as integral wholes than the national state or the chronological period?

Looseness in treatment of details adds substance to the suspicion that Toynbee's unit of study is at bottom artificial. The terms, "community," "society," and "civilization" are often used as if they were synonymous. Sparta and Judaism appear in some illustrations as civilizations in their own rights, elsewhere as parts of other civilizations. Significant human cultures do not fit the Toynbee categories at all; they must be crammed into special compartments, labeled "fossilized," "abortive," "arrested," or "primitive societies," terms which are not invidious, but which simply mean that the Jews, the Celts, the Polynesians, the Gypsies do not fit into the master scheme.

These difficulties of classification and the absence of explicit definition expose the fact that Toynbee cannot clearly differentiate between what is a civilization and what is not except through the explanation that a civilization is whatever behaves in conformity with the fixed pattern a civilization should follow. The conception does not arise from the materials of history; it is simply a device manufactured to give order to a scheme imposed upon the data of history.

II

It will be more profitable to shift our analysis from the arbitrary and formal order of the author to underlying qualities that shape the form of the work. Having assessed the validity of the method and techniques, it will then be possible to evaluate the specific conclusions.

A Study of History is a reverie, a long uneasy dream about the nature of man and his society. The appearance of reality, the sense of likeness to past events, and of likelihood of future ones conceals the frustrations and fears that cannot be confronted in the day to day life of the Director of Research for the British Foreign Office.

The familiar marks of the dream are recognizable in language, in content, and in organization. Words have intimate meanings known only to the dreamer. "Civilization" and "fossilized" are used in a sense employed by no one else. If the "proletariat" is habitually referred to in a manner that equates it with the barbaric, the vulgar, the promiscuous, that is due to the fact that the term is defined as "any social element or group which in some way is *in* but not *of* any given society at any period of that society's history." Similarly his editor at one point finds it necessary to explain, "It will perhaps have occurred to the reader that the intelligentsia, in Mr. Toynbee's use of the term, is the social equivalent of the political animal described as a 'quisling.'"

Some symbols and meanings are esoteric and fearsome, not to be revealed in a state of simplicity. They are draped in words with unfamiliar Greek instead of the familiar Latin or German roots. Such terms as palingensia and mimesis consistently take the place of their equivalents, rebirth and imitation; and the most cherished images of all are clothed in the original Greek without the indulgence of transliteration.

Unexpected meanings in the same way attach themselves to remembered lines of poetry. The last stanzas of *Hellas* are quoted in connection with cyclical theories of history, although Shelley intended them to refer to regeneration. Henry Vaughan's *Retreat* serves to illustrate the impulse to archaism although the poet thought of a retreat to "early days" not in historical or cultural terms, but of childhood. A line from *Love's Grave*, "We are betrayed by what is false within," describes the suicide of civilizations as if those were persons. The connections are purely verbal, abstracted from the meaning of the whole, as in the dream where known objects appear with seeming reasonableness in unreasonable places.

We arrive thus at the proposition: "The stimulus towards civilization grows positively stronger in proportion as the environment grows more difficult." Before us flash the Yellow River Valley, Attica, Byzantium, Israel, Brandenburg, Scotland, finally the conquest of North America by New England. Then comes the conclusion: "Thus North American history tells in favor of the proposition: the greater

the difficulty, the greater the stimulus." Or, again, we meet the decisive pronouncement: "The historical link between sixteenth-century Calvinism and twentieth-century Communism is nineteenth-century Liberalism."

All is out of context. Restore the context and the points are irretrievably lost. We may ask, was the defeat of the Dutch and French empires by the English colonies in the eighteenth century, or of the South by the North in the Civil War, connected with the hard ground on which the New Englanders settled, or with such factors as the development of sea power and the growth of industrialism? To establish a link between the doctrine of election, the idea of progress, and historical materialism through the elements of determinism in each is to stress an incidental similarity above the essential differences. Calvinism played no part in the formulation of the idea of progress by such men as Turgot, Condorcet, Godwin, nor did these influence Marx and Engels in any but the most negative way. In view of the deterministic elements in the thinking of such people as Hegel and Treitschke, we could as well substitute Conservatism for Liberalism in Toynbee's dictum.

Throughout phantasmagoria is the fundamental method of proof. Often the argument descends into a repetition of inconclusive examples, inconclusive because other examples could as well be cited to prove the opposite. If Virginia and South Carolina show how the idolization of a once glorious past stood in the way of industrialization and progress after the Civil War, what of Georgia and Alabama where the same idolization did not stand in the way? If pressure from the Ottoman Turks was the stimulus to which the greatness of the Austrian empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the response, why did not Romanov Russians produce the same response to the identical stimulus in the nineteenth century? Archaism is one of the alternative ways of life open to souls born into a socially disintegrating world; futurism is the other. But Toynbee's periods of growth also show signs of archaism and futurism, the fifteenth century, for instance, in the revival of Greek and in the work of Leonardo.

Elsewhere a succession of analogies supports the exposition. Societies are sleepers at the foot of a cliff. Awakened they are civilizations and commence the climb to their respective eminences, a figure reduced to its graphic minimum in a recent cover of *Time*. The same figure can have a meaning other than Toynbee's; the men in the picture may really be struggling to hold on while they slip inexorably

downward, and the recumbent ones are the fallen dead. Or, other analogies may equally well be applied to describe societies—runners in a circle, or marchers on a treadmill, or riders on an elevator. These metaphorical devices are infinitely malleable in the mind of the dreamer for they can only illustrate and dramatize what is already assumed; they cannot take the place of proof.

The tortuous reasoning with which the whole is set forth expresses the eagerness to identify the images of the dream with the real world. Yet comparison of the two realms exposes gross errors of fact, significant by their very perpetration.

For instance: Epic poetry is the product of barbarian invaders beating against civilization's walls. The *Chanson de Roland* "parent of all the poetry that has ever been written since that day in any of the vernacular languages of the Western World" was the creation of the "French semi-barbarian Crusaders" who broke through the Spanish front of the Syriac universal state. But this work is in no sense barbaric or primitive. Product of the pen of a cultivated poet, it was one of the first signs of the renaissance of the twelfth century. Influenced by the current rebirth of literature and of learning, it was inspired by the purification of Christianity in the same period, elsewhere marked by Toynbee as a *tour de force* of a creative minority.

Again: "The very names of the three chief wars of the first half of the eighteenth century . . . suggest that wars only occurred when matrimonial arrangements had got into an inextricable tangle." During that period war was "merely a 'sport of kings.'" Surely no other historian could forget that colonial empires were involved in these struggles, which were not simply European but reached around the world.

Or: Throughout the work runs the assumption that the teachings of Christ were rejected by the Jews at a specific point in history. Two generations of scholars have labored to demonstrate the essential place of Christianity in the Pharisaic tradition and to show that the differentiation of Christians from other Jews, was a process lasting four centuries. It may be said in passing that all the references to Judaism reveal fundamental ignorance. The general picture of a rigid fossilized culture, the same now as two thousand years ago, flies in the face of a long history of variations and adjustments, Babylon to Spain to Poland. The discussion of Ashkenazi-Sephardic differences is steeped in error and prejudice. And the description of the Marxian picture of class war as a notion borrowed by "the German Jew Karl Marx" from the "apocalyptic visions of a repudiated religious tradition," speaks for itself.

These misstatements reveal a disregard for the data of history, an unwillingness to consider factual content except insofar as it conforms to the order imposed. That reluctance to bow to the irksome restraints of his material sometimes reaches the point where Toynbee not only disregards but consciously defies the facts.

In Volume IV of the original opus stood the assertion that North Carolina "produced some of the great men of the twentieth century" such as Woodrow Wilson. Wilson actually spent four unimportant years of his life in that state before he entered Princeton as an undergraduate. That brief period had no discernible influence upon his career or ideas. A review by Charles A. Beard in the *American Historical Review* singled out for ridicule the whole passage in which this sentence stood. But in the abridgment it still appears unmodified.

To prove that total war is a consequence of democracy, Toynbee gives a horrendous and overdrawn picture of the treatment of the loyalists in the American Revolution. "This first example of 'totalitarianism' is significant for the victorious American colonists were the first democratized nation of our Western society." A footnote blandly acknowledges that there was a precedent a half-century earlier in the action of the nondemocratic British authorities in Nova Scotia.

More generally, this intransigence is reflected in the failure to use the materials on which modern scientific history has labored in the past half-century. Toynbee centers his study upon politics and religion with casual and often inaccurate attention to economics and ideas. This same stubbornness often leads to a blind contentiousness. In a long, meaningless quarrel, Gibbon is castigated for marking the beginnings of the decline of the Roman empire in the second century A.D.: with infinite pains and much satisfaction Toynbee demonstrates that Hellenic Civilization had already begun to decline five hundred years earlier, even before there was a Roman empire. The struggle with Gibbon has the intensity and reality of a nightmare. Like the sleeper possessed, Toynbee cannot comprehend that his antagonist is not there. Gibbon's problem is altogether different.

III

These illustrations of techniques, selected from among many, demonstrate that *A Study of History* is not a work that meets the tests of historical proof. If it merits attention, it is as an imaginative

description of a reverie, to be judged on philosophic or aesthetic grounds.

Accept for a moment the conventional figure, Civilization. According to Toynbee, a civilization comes into being through an unusual response to a challenge from the physical or human environment, grows when each such response produces new stimuli evocative of further responses that steadily extend the area of self-articulation and self-determination, until a point of crisis when a breakdown occurs. Thereafter disintegration sets in, marked by failures of self-determination, or loss of command over the environment. Disintegration may be accompanied by a rapid expansion of productive techniques, by a flourishing of the arts and the development of science, philosophy, and religion. But these are incidentals, irrelevant to the central issue, which is loss of control.

We must ask, however, control by, for, whom? Western civilization's period of growth ended in the fifteenth century, says Toynbee. He sees no difficulty in the circumstance that the great mass of human beings who then lived in Europe had acquired no marked degree of self-determination measurable by standard of living, life expectancy, or access to the channels of culture. For him growth is relevant only to a few: "All acts of social creation are the work either of individual creators," or, at most, of creative minorities which drag the people "of common clay" along in a "sluggish rearguard." A civilization is essentially the relationship between the creative few and their human and physical environment. It grows through a succession of *tours de force* by heroes who thereby increase the degree of their control over the masses who follow in a movement of drill-like imitation. It flags when the heroic capacity for response to challenges fails and the creative minority, which then loses its attractiveness, must resort to violence to hold control.

We cannot discover historical evidence to confirm this view of the docile relations of the masses to their leaders. Certainly force was inherent in the social system of the period of growth of Western Civilization, whether in the roles of master and serf or lord and vassal. And the later exhibitions of creative skill cited in *A Study of History* were hardly the outcome of the application of charm. The development of English parliamentarianism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the balance of power in Italian city states of the fourteenth and fifteenth were consummated by violence and coercion.

Indeed Toynbee's exposition of the nature and role of the creative minority and creative personality rests primarily upon refer-

ences to imaginative and intuitive expressions in poetry and myth. There is a show of intellectual support from the conception, made up of borrowings from Henri Bergson and Jan Christian Smuts, of an inner creative source of the heroic response to challenge. But that philosophic basis is ambiguous and contradictory. For the total systems of these men are consistent neither with each other nor with Toynbee's plan of history.

We are thus never given an explanation of the nature of the link between the inner *élan* and the external environment; its existence is simply affirmed. The external environment alone does not call forth the response. Nor does the response emerge without the challenge. But is the coincidence accidental or contingent? Are there challenges to which there may be no response, and *élans* which may never come to fruition?

These problems are not troublesome to Toynbee; he acknowledges that such contradictions cannot be resolved, and places his confidence in naked intuition. *A Study of History* makes no attempt to establish a synthesis or to supply a foundation of its own. Constantly it edges up to metaphysical problems without ever explicitly confronting them, and we are continually abandoned on the verge of assumptions that are never revealed.

We cannot observe the operations of intuition. But we can criticize its results. If the nature of the heroes and of their heroic responses is still befogged, the nature of their tasks is clear—and on reconsideration, enlightening. The "rare and superhuman souls" who lead fight a two-handed enemy. They must struggle both against the physical environment and against the pressure of the treacherous mass, which lacks capacity for understanding and must be compelled by charm or force to follow.

Consideration of that task in our own civilization arouses in Toynbee a deep sense of uneasiness which seeps through in unexpected passages, as in the ill-tempered defense of British imperialism, in the irritation with Hindus and Zionists, in the unusual meanings given proletariat and intelligentsia, in the general distrust of intellectual processes. In the six volumes, there is not a good word said for democracy, perhaps an unconscious omission; but democracy is assigned the responsibility for the failures of modern education and the horrors of modern war. The sense of shock that comes from contemplation of the cinema where "people of all classes" take "an equal pleasure in films designed to cater for the taste of the proletarian majority" is only matched by the trauma which comes from observ-

ing public school boys degenerate enough "to conceal the obligatory white collar" with a "scarf with its convincing air of negligence." In a world too precarious for the old solid beliefs, Toynbee seeks, in retrospect and reverie, reassurance that there is still meaning in the struggle and that all may yet be made well.

Fear is the germ from which such dreams grow, fear lest desperate hopes betray their own illusory nature. But there are differences in the quality of dreams. An old revolutionary, who saw his revolution whirl out of his grasp, gave over the months spent waiting for the guillotine to recording analogous visions. But the *Tableau Historique* of 1793 contained a far more authentic perception of the nature of history, for Condorcet knew that both the measure and means of the development of human society lay in the condition of the human beings who are the subjects of history. Toynbee's dream of the defiant individual who hurls himself against the mass, of man and of matter, is atavistic. His hero is a very old hero, only less recognizable because bandaged to cover the wounds of two world wars and their consequences.

The dangerous dream is the dream of half lights, of gray dusks that deepen into darkness and conceal the outlines of the waking world. In the confusion of analogies and comparisons, every wish calls forth its fulfillment and every fear its compensation. Anyone who takes these grotesque images as a guide to action runs the risk of a total loss of perspective.

Film Chronicle

MONSIEUR VERDOUX

CHAPLIN'S TRAMP, taken in his most direct significance, represented the good-hearted and personally cultivated individual in a heartless and vulgar society. The society was concerned only with the pursuit of profit, and often not even with that so much as with the mere preservation of the ugly and impersonal machinery by which the profit was gained; the Tramp was concerned with the practice of personal relations and the social graces. Most of all the Tramp was like an aristocrat fallen on hard times, for what he attempted in all his behavior was to maintain certain standards of refinement and humanity, to keep life dignified and make it emotionally and aesthetically satisfying.

The relationship between the Tramp and his society never solidified. Sometimes the Tramp was able to make use of the society for his own peculiar ends. Sometimes the society in its mysterious processes seized upon the Tramp and endowed him with wealth and honor. The constant difficulties between the two never developed to the point where the Tramp could begin to think of himself as opposed to the society; indeed, it was essential to his character that he should take the society as given and make his own life on its margin. And the society, for its part, had nothing against the Tramp; even when it knocked him down, it did so not because he was a threat—the society was too impersonal even to conceive of such a possibility—but simply because his behavior was preposterous; the blow was always delivered in a fit of abstraction, so to speak, without serious intent. The satiric point of the relationship lay precisely in this element of fortuitousness and innocence: it *happened* that the Tramp and the society were in constant collision, but neither side was impelled to draw any conclusions from this. The absurdity of the Tramp's behavior consisted in its irrelevance to the preoccupations of the society; the viciousness of the society consisted in its failure to make any provision for the Tramp, in its complete indifference to his fate.

After 1933, it became increasingly more difficult to maintain such a picture of the relationship between the individual and his society. Now the two were compelled to become conscious of each other, openly and continuously, and the quality of innocence—even if it had been only an apparent innocence—could no longer be preserved between them;

from this point on, there would always be on each side a clear *intent* in regard to the other. The society, seeing in the individual both an indispensable instrument and a constant danger, would find it necessary to take a more and more active and organized interest in all his concerns. And the individual would be forced thereby to assume a position: he would have to be for or against the society, and his decision in this regard would immediately become the determining factor in his life and the defining element of his character. The margin in which the Tramp had managed to survive and carry on his life, on however small a scale, was becoming narrower; at length it would disappear.

This had an immediate effect on Chaplin. The impact of his art, its comic point, has always come in large measure from his insistence on pushing everything to its extreme. He creates his movie world by a process of logical extension (this is of course true of most satire), and he has an unfailing instinct in the selection of precisely those leading elements that will bear extension. (In this he is helped rather than hindered by a certain simplicity in his conception of political and social problems.) From the moment that he could no longer define society (in its logical extreme) by its indifference to the individual, then, for his purposes, the position of the Tramp became questionable, for the Tramp and his society, despite the instability and tenuousness of their relations, were aesthetically inseparable.

The change begins to appear in *Modern Times*, made during the depression. In the factory's treatment of the Tramp there is neither accident nor innocence; the factory is a living, malevolent organism bent on putting the Tramp to certain specific uses. An atmosphere of personal and intended viciousness appears—in the inescapable, nagging voice of authority over the public-address system, or in the terrible experiment with the feeding machine—and this viciousness is a new thing in Chaplin's movies, residing as it does neither in individual human beings nor in the mechanical imperviousness of mere organization, but in a system that has acquired personality. The Tramp can still keep his innocence—he is put in jail because of a political demonstration that takes place *around* him, while he himself is not involved and does not understand what is happening—and in the end he can still escape from the system and disappear down the road. But he cannot circumvent the system or turn it to his own account, and there are ominous signs that the situation will soon be beyond his powers of adjustment. In this movie more than ever before, one is kept aware of his ultimate helplessness; certainly he never seems so *little* a man as when he finds his arms still twitching after the hours of tightening an endless series of the same two bolts.

The end comes in *The Great Dictator*, where the whole mechanism of society is brought to bear against the Tramp in a deliberate effort to

make him suffer and, ultimately, to kill him. This direct threat demands a direct response. Merely to escape is not enough, for the final meaning of such a society must be that there is no escape; what is required of the Tramp is that he should attempt to destroy the society. But the Tramp is simply not adequate to the attempt, and in the end Chaplin feels compelled to speak out in his own voice—what could the Tramp have to say about politics? (The quality of Chaplin's own politics is of course not in question here.) Thus the failure of *The Great Dictator* results primarily from Chaplin's reliance on an instrument that was no longer suitable. This becomes quite plain, I think, when one considers how successfully he handles the figures of Hitler and Mussolini; if it were simply a matter of his having chosen "the wrong theme," then one would except this "wrongness" to be most apparent in just those scenes where the Tramp does not appear. The fact is that the theme was almost the only possible one for Chaplin; it was wrong only for the Tramp.

The Tramp has the proportions of a legendary figure. Though he is among the least "real" of artistic constructs, yet by the very disproportion of his personality, by his deep and unshakable eccentricity, he can carry everything before him, like Falstaff or Micawber, achieving a kind of independent existence apart from the particular movies in which he has appeared. The Tramp creates his world, and everything else must take its color from his presence.

Verdoux is not so tremendous a creation. He exists for one movie, and his whole meaning is contained in the movie. He has made his point, once and for all.

Verdoux does not create the world, he is only an element of the world. At bottom, it is his own consciousness of this limitation that drives him. He is a man with needs and responsibilities, he must make his way. What are the mechanisms of society? Where are the opportunities? These questions are vitally important to him; he is therefore a busy and enterprising man, full of plans. For the Tramp, it was enough simply to exist; Verdoux must analyze his situation and find ways to meet it. He is like the Tramp in many ways: he has the same social charm and physical gracefulness, above all the same civilized feeling for the possibilities of personal intercourse and good living; but he must put all these qualities to use—he becomes like a cultured jewelry salesman, or the manager of a high-class restaurant, making a profit out of his refinement.

He is only an element of the world, but he carries the world inside him. With Verdoux, the opposition between the individual and society has lost its old simplicity. The society has flowed into the individual, and the two have in a sense become co-extensive; the struggle is now an

internal struggle, full of ambiguities and contradictions; it is man himself who is corrupt, both as individual and as society, and Verdoux's problem is to make some working order out of the conflicting needs of his own personality. When he makes his decision, it is as much a decision about his own nature as about the nature of society.

Indeed, we do not see the society at all, except in Verdoux and through Verdoux's eyes. There is no background. There is only Verdoux and his family and his victims, and a few supernumeraries—a friend, a girl in a flower shop, a detective, some reporters (the detective and the reporters are not society, they are only making a living in *their* way), a court of justice, a priest (these are not society either, but only the necessary instruments for Verdoux's triumphal progress to the guillotine; he makes use of them). There is also, at one point, some political documentation—shots of Hitler and Mussolini, marching soldiers, newspaper headlines, ruined business men committing suicide, etc.—but this is really Verdoux's own documentation, the evidence in his defense. Verdoux remains an isolated figure without a context—or, rather, the context is a projection of his mind, and all we are told of it is what he tells us.

Thus there is no solid point of reference; everything is open to question. The meanings shift and turn and spread until the whole movie, and ultimately the whole world, is enveloped in ambiguity and irony, and it is no longer certain whom the joke is on. Not only is Verdoux caught in his own irony; sometimes it is we in the audience who are caught, and sometimes Chaplin himself—it is significant of the character of this movie, and to some extent, perhaps, of Chaplin's personal character, that one should feel that he does not always understand the implications of his work.

Complex and sustained irony is a rare thing in literature and rarer still in the movies, if indeed it has ever before appeared in the movies at all. Probably the closest analogy to *Monsieur Verdoux* is Swift's *Modest Proposal*, where, despite the simplicity of the basic idea, one can never quite get to the bottom of the irony. Just as there have been people who could see nothing funny about eating babies, so there are people who can see nothing funny about the mass murder of women. And there is in both cases a certain difficulty in critical discussion. I can do best here by paraphrasing what George Saintsbury wrote of the *Modest Proposal*: "That Chaplin does not really mean to recommend mass murder, though perfectly true, could hardly be urged by anybody capable of enjoying *Monsieur Verdoux*, and would not be listened to by anyone whom it horrifies." But even this is too simple. While it is perfectly true that Chaplin does not mean to recommend mass murder, it is also true that he makes out the best possible case for it: the spectator is likely to find himself following Verdoux's activities with eagerness and sharing Verdoux's irritation when his plans are frustrated.

Verdoux's original point is clear enough: business is like murder and therefore murder is only a kind of business. Obviously this is not the strict truth; just as obviously, it is more valuable than the strict truth: no satirist could do much with the proposition that business is *sometimes* like murder. And, of course, the final product of the totality of the world's business usually does turn out to be murder. Verdoux is on firm ground, theoretically.

In practice, however, the matter immediately becomes more complicated, as Verdoux himself is to some extent forced to recognize. Crime does not pay, after all—not in a small way, that is. “Numbers sanctify,” Verdoux says, trying to prove that his death on the guillotine is no more than a business failure. But he is wrong to minimize the guillotine. What could be worse than a business failure? Perhaps there is more justice in his death than he is prepared to admit.

The complications go further than this. Despite the clarity of his original perceptions, Verdoux becomes corrupt, and with the corruption not so much of a murderer as of a businessman. It is a hard struggle, he tells us; I go into the jungle only because I must fight for my wife and my child, all that I love in the world. When he says this he is not to be trusted. The jungle is everything to him and his home is only his convenient excuse—characterless blond child and colorless dull wife (how useful that she is crippled!), existing only so that he may have a symbol to justify his ambition. This is not my doing, he says; I found myself unwanted and I was forced to go into business for myself. But is it not best of all to be in business for oneself? He betrays himself as we watch: only in the jungle world of his calling does he display animation and charm, competence as a social being and a man of affairs, a sense of his own powers and his own position. At home he is only the suburbanite, momentarily relaxed and safe, indeed, but impatient to get back to the real world of business. Even a great domestic event—when Verdoux on his wedding anniversary brings his wife the deed to their home, a pledge of security and the happy fruit of his labors—is made flat and insignificant. “What is that?” the child asks, and the mother replies, “It is the deed to this beautiful house and garden”—the blessings of the bourgeois home must be counted to be seen.

Much later—after Verdoux has been ruined in a financial crash, and after the shots of newspaper headlines and marching men—there is one sentence to tell us what became of this home: “Soon after the crash, I lost my wife and child,” Verdoux says, explaining why he has no more heart for business. And he adds, insisting on his point: “However, they are happier where they are.” Thus with a word the crippled wife and the blond child are gone, and as their existence seemed not enough to account for his activity, so their disappearance seems not enough to account for his decline. One feels again that Verdoux is deceiving himself

—is not self-deception the great bourgeois sin? Perhaps it was the crash itself that broke his spirit; perhaps it is simply that the aging and unsuccessful murderer, like the aging and unsuccessful businessman, comes to feel that his time has been wasted.

The peculiarly mechanical and almost unconcerned treatment of Verdoux's family is one of the elements that seem to get Chaplin himself involved in the movie's ambiguities. There has often been an obvious morbidity in Chaplin's sentiment: he has been really tender only with the maimed and the helpless, as if he required some palpable sign of misfortune and innocence before he could feel sympathy. This sentimentality is in one aspect simply the reverse of his humor, for the helpless cripple is also a kind of logical extension. But where the satiric extension has the effect of broadening the satiric view of society, bringing more and more objects into the field of the ridiculous, the sentimental extension does not broaden sentiment. On the contrary, by concentrating all sympathy upon the obviously helpless, it becomes a means of narrowing the field of sentiment (if you are not crippled, then you are not innocent) and it thus reinforces the satire instead of counterbalancing it.

In *Monsieur Verdoux*, where Chaplin's view of society has taken on a new savagery, it would appear that he has correspondingly narrowed the field of his sympathies even further. The crippled wife and the helpless child are here, but they have become formal symbols without content, expressing only an abstract belief in the moral importance of helplessness. Chaplin still feels these figures to be necessary, but he seems unable to take a direct interest in them. The true object of his tenderness is another figure, the homeless girl on whom Verdoux plans to test his new poison. This girl personifies the gallant and lonely individual bearing up confidently against the cruelties of life. She is alone, but she is not helpless at all—except before Verdoux, and everyone is helpless before Verdoux: even when he is caught at last, it must be by his own choice. She is like Verdoux in many ways: she, too, is trying to make her way; she, too, has suffered the world's blows; he can feel that she understands the problem of life in his terms (she carries a volume of Schopenhauer), and if her conclusions are in opposition to his, this is all to the good, for it permits him to regard her as a child and to feel his own wisdom. (But in the end it will be she who "succeeds"—as the mistress of a munitions manufacturer—and she will sit weeping at Verdoux's trial.) Most important, she has loved an invalid—it is this that makes him decide to spare her life. Thus it is no longer the cripple who embodies virtue; it is only the person who loves the cripple. In short, it is Chaplin himself, and the projections of himself that he puts upon the screen.

The film's quality of ambiguity—its tendency to make its statements incompletely, or to take them back after they have been made, or to modify and complicate them—is perhaps most apparent in the talk. There is a great deal of talk, and a number of critics have found it objectionable, either because it bored them or because they saw it as a violation of the rather artificial principle that a movie must rely only on the camera. I do not wish to claim that Verdoux's expositions of his ideas are among the best things in the movie, but I found them full of interest in themselves and extremely important in developing the total effect of the movie's involved irony.

It may take some freshness of mind to reach the conclusion that business is like murder, but there is also a certain puerility in laboring the point. When Verdoux enunciates his ideas, they quickly become platitudes, so that in attacking capitalist society, however sharply, he simultaneously betrays the corruption of his own mind. But then the irony takes one more turn, for, as I have said, the corruption of Verdoux's mind is precisely the corruption of the bourgeois mind, and in exposing himself he again exposes his society. When he says, "This is a ruthless world," or "Violence begets violence," what is that but the self-satisfied voice of the practical man of business who takes a certain pride in his "philosophy"?

In the final scenes before Verdoux's execution, the irony of his speech and behavior reaches a climax of intensity and complication. "I go to meet my destiny," he says, half seriously, as he prepares to deliver himself to the police. And he maintains this ironic grandeur to the end. He scores off everybody, for he has his clear-sighted "philosophy" and the others have only their miserable falsehoods. "As a mass killer, I am an amateur," he says in the court room, and then, his last little dig before he is sentenced: "I shall see you all very soon . . . very soon." In the death cell during his last minutes, he is still eloquent: good and evil—"too much of either will destroy us all"; sin—"who knows what ultimate purpose it serves?" Graciously, he dismisses a reporter: "I hope you will pardon me; my time is limited." He greets the priest, bowing: "Ah, father! And what can I do for you?" He is, you might say, magnificent. Is this not how we should all wish to go to our executions—smiling, dignified, witty, waving aside the last cigarette, accepting the last drink ("Rum? I've never tasted rum . . ."), quietly laughing at the whole world? At the same time, this dream is after all a little childish (it is a curious fact that Chaplin actually looks like the elder Douglas Fairbanks in this last scene), and Verdoux's triumph is really not much: they *will* cut his head off, and the one thing he has failed to do with all his talk is to establish a single reason why they should not.

So everything goes down together, all caught in the same complex absurdity: the capitalist world; then, in a heap, Verdoux the murderer

and man of business, Verdoux the cracker-barrel philosopher, Verdoux the lonely romantic; then Chaplin himself, who believes in Verdoux even if he also believes in the irony that denies him; then we in the audience, who sit watching Chaplin and somehow believing everything at once; finally, the capitalist world again, which produced Verdoux, murderer, philosopher, and all. The final word, canceling all others, is in the movie's last shot: Verdoux is a very small figure as he walks to the guillotine, limping, overshadowed by his guards.

The nearest approach to solidity and directness is in the treatment of Verdoux's victims and intended victims. These women are not simple characters, but they are simpler than Verdoux, if only because he manipulates them, and the important facts about them are clear and unambiguous: they are stupid and unhappy, in varying degrees, and they want glamor and love. Since their dramatic function does not require them to be active, their qualities remain constant; they are not touched by the irony that envelops everything else—indeed, in the case of the Martha Raye character, Annabella, one cannot even conceive of the possibility of irony: she is too uncompromising a statement of the value of life. The women are stationary points, and the argument, so to speak, rages around them: they naturally have no idea that anything is at stake; it is only for Verdoux that the situation is complicated.

Chaplin does wonderful things with these women. Even Thelma, whom we never see except as a billow of black smoke pouring from an incinerator, is made clear to us: when we have seen her family, we know all we need to know. In the scenes with Lydia, the only woman actually murdered during the time covered by the movie, the menace of Verdoux's character, his immense coldness, is at its height. Lydia is an old and bitter woman, and we can see in her face and her posture the whole long unhappiness of her life, while Verdoux thinks only of her money, moving around like a cat as he makes his soft and gentlemanly speeches ("Life can so easily degenerate into something sordid and vulgar. Let us try to keep it beautiful and dignified") and glancing occasionally at the clock to see whether there is still time to win her over before the bank closes. Later, when it is time to go to bed, Verdoux flexes his fingers a little as he gets up to follow her, and they walk upstairs, Lydia nagging at him—did you lock the door? did you close the window?—and Verdoux answering softly, patiently: yes, dear, yes dear; then she goes into the bedroom and he stops for a moment in the hall, looking out at the moon and quietly speaking some lines of poetry that occur to him; and then he follows her, to carry out his necessary and melancholy task.

With Madame Grosnay, the wealthy widow whom he pursues at various times throughout the movie, Verdoux is at his most charming—in this case, the question of murder is still in the future. And it is here that Verdoux is most like the Tramp—a man of taste and sensibility

(how gracefully he handles the roses!), but awkward, impetuous, rather boyish. What finally wins Madame Grosnay's heart is most of all his delightful lack of sophistication, the seeming transparency of his intentions. In the midst of one speech, Verdoux suddenly falls out the window—how could she distrust him after that? And later, when Madame Grosnay has at last suggested that Verdoux need not hope in vain, there is one of Chaplin's great moments: overcome by this encouragement, the happy lover lunges at his lady on the sofa, overshoots the mark, recovers himself, and throws himself upon her again—all without spilling the cup of tea in his hand; it is the perfect symbol of the two sides of Verdoux's character.

But the most interesting of the women is Annabella. Any attempt to disentangle Chaplin's own values from the movie, or to identify him absolutely with Verdoux, must take her into account. Annabella is the full antithesis of Verdoux; she is loud and vulgar and stupid, and she is as far removed as possible from the world of practical business enterprise: her money has been won in a lottery, and she invests it in hare-brained enterprises exclusively—for instance, a project for generating electric power by harnessing the rocking motion of the sea ("If it works, we'll just own the ocean, that's all!"). She is even in some degree resistant to Verdoux's charm, and she regards him with a moronic suspicion that is not to be overcome by the most disarming behavior. It is this creature who defeats Verdoux, and she defeats him not by opposing a superior reason or a superior morality to his, but simply by a kind of blind fatality, as if she were a force of nature. Not only does she defeat him: she overshadows him at every moment. With Annabella, Verdoux is a subdued man; intelligence is on his side, but in this case intelligence does not count—Annabella has the vitality. There is a kind of desperation in his painstaking and elaborate attempts to kill her: he is like a patient and conscientious man who tries to accomplish some perfectly reasonable and simple act and finds himself unaccountably blocked. In the end, when the lonely lake and the rope with a rock tied to it have failed, even he as he picks up the oars seems to sense that he is up against a force greater than his own.

Verdoux's society cannot completely destroy him, even on the guillotine, for he is the society, and his complete destruction would be the society's death. But the existence of Annabella means that a different answer is possible: the one thing that Verdoux cannot destroy, and thus the one thing that the society cannot destroy, is the simple and unrefined fact of mere vitality.

A great deal could be said of the many other elements that help to give the movie its moment-to-moment qualities of imagination and dramatic force: the peculiar involutions and profundities of Chaplin's

feelings for women, the complete confidence of his technique (he always does whatever is needed in the most direct way possible), the variety of his invention, above all his unfailing awareness of *all* the emotional and dramatic possibilities of every situation. (This last quality is shown perhaps most brilliantly in the treatment of Annabella's maid. Few things in the movie are at once so completely funny and so completely terrible as the scene in which this miserable creature begins to lose her hair.) But what I have primarily tried to demonstrate here is that the movie must be approached with a willingness to understand and enjoy it as a shifting pattern of ambiguity and irony, made up of all the complexities and contradictions not only of our society but of Chaplin's own mind and the mind of the spectator. Much of the hostility to the movie seems to come from reluctance to accept its shifting point of view, its remarkable quality of being at once uncompromising and uncommitted. We are used to flat and simple statements, especially in the movies; as a consequence, some who have seen *Monsieur Verdoux* have found it unpleasantly disturbing, and some have simply refused to recognize its complexity at all, condemning Chaplin because they disagree with Verdoux—though Verdoux certainly does not ask for agreement, and, if he did, it would still not be clear what he wanted us to agree to.

Chaplin is surely one of the few great comic geniuses who have appeared so far in history. It seems to me relatively unimportant to decide whether or not *Monsieur Verdoux* is his best movie; we do not have all his movies before us, and at any rate, as I have tried to show, *Monsieur Verdoux* is the product of a radical change in his vision of the world. Taken by itself, it is a great work of irony; and it is unique among movies, for it requires of the spectator that he should constantly reflect upon what he sees on the screen and what he discovers in his own mind.

ROBERT WARSHOW

P o e m s

SEQUENCE 1944-46

1

I look at the pines on the hillside,
Alive,
And they not I who work
More or less absorbed
Have died.

2

But lose patience,
I lose patience.
Tied to song
Cannot speak.

We cross upon
One acre of music—
Asking
(So close who are cross)
Of acres and music:
Patience and time.

I am crazy about you

I feel
sick.

3

Heart too human
To prefer the humane
That will not stop you

From beating again
And again

Wild

Thoughtful love
Crying, crying
Unreasoning child—

4

Having outlived self-offense
And that of my friends
I become brother to loneliness
And love the fact more than the word.

All that is human is
Alien and not alien.
All carefully chosen words
Are here—fairly shadows.

You have music to accord.
A child
At a remove from love
Holds leaves in my hand.

Where the world is headed
We do not say
As stars
Sun and surf

Flash in the sky. Were it said
Among twigs
“And then the world went
And then—”

Only our thoughts
Might seek it
In further woods.

5

(Flushing Meadows)

The flags in the water
 Like grain that will not grow—
 Out of the way
 Out of the flow—

Silt and the sand
 Where there is no harbor
 Grow for the eye
 That slows the hand.

LOUIS ZUKOFSKY

THE EGYPTIAN

The Egyptian strides toward me through the blossoming keyhole
 with a crowing cock on his shoulder and a mouthful of birds.
 I rise from my rest to greet him with a bouquet of words,
 but he strikes them from my lips with the lash of hours.

My enemy! whose numberless pyramids loom
 like incandescent elephants through the blue tears of the sky.
 My lily of love lies withering at the foot of day,
 and once again I am given my load of unbearable brick.

Why should I build his monuments with unbearable brick?
 I sit by the ocean and finger the harp of its flood;
 he spins in his robes like an ugly whirlpool of blood:
 and the lash of hours finds me bending to build.

But the time for my challenge explodes, and, giant of straw
 though I am, we grapple, and trample the ashes of flowers,
 jarring the noonday sun from his pedestal towers:
 the pyramids melt in his heart, and evening rolls in off the sea.

A shadowy isthmus is opened toward the lily of the horizon
 that beckons me with a haven of stars across the musical ocean.
 I cross dry-footed, and hear the cry of the lost Egyptian
 drowning in his chariot under noiseless fathoms of slumber.

EDITH WEAVER

Theater Chronicle

WHAT A PIECE OF WORK IS MAN!

PROCEEDING BACKWARD down the arcade of English comedy, John Gielgud and his company arrive, in Congreve's *Love for Love* (Royale Theater), at a bay of felicity. From this point, it is possible to look in one direction toward Jonson and the Elizabethans and in another toward Sheridan and Wilde. William and Mary were on the throne when Congreve wrote this comedy; commercial expansion had begun but the receding rural England was not forgotten, and the marriage of a Stuart princess of romantic heredity to a businesslike Dutch burgher expressed on the dynastic plane this equivocal moment in English history which is arrested in *Love for Love*, a play which has no graspable subject but is like an equation in balance. The whole world of nature is still present in these London lodgings. Ending in a dance, and interspersed with songs, the play has strong masque suggestions, with the sea being danced by Brother Ben, red-faced and marine as Poseidon, the stars by old Foresight, the astrologer, and the earth by the country girl, Prue, a stumpy little sex fetish rabid with desire of generation. Here, as with Dogberry and Verges, Shallow and Silence, and the innumerable troupe of clowns and rustics, rural idiocy is on the one hand the butt of the playwright and on the other a source of vitality. This ignorance is bliss, a gift of the Muses, country girls from Pieria themselves, to the urbanized author. In much the same way, the stock types from the earlier comedy are present here, like simples handed down from one play-doctor to another. The Alchemist survives in Foresight, Orlando in Valentine, and all those primitive vices and humors in Mr. Tattle, Mrs. Frail, and Sir Sampson Legend, whose very name proclaims what he is—an indomitable old myth.

Looking the other way, in what must be admitted is a diminishing perspective, toward Sheridan, Wilde, Coward, one sees at the end of the vista a drawing-room in which Tattle and Scandal will still be drinking Valentine's sherry and being wicked and fastidious and selfish and fatigued. Plato and Epictetus will no longer be found on the table (Valentine Discover'd Reading would be Valentine discovered dead), and Jeremy, the manservant, will now be called Fetch, but Angelica's fortune will still be the object, and comfort a necessity to gentlemen without employment. Those who find Wilde original would do well to

return to Congreve—it is *Love for Love*, truly, which ushers in the age of insolence. Hardness of heart (Valentine turning off his old mistress when she comes to see him with one of his children), greed (Valentine's designs on his father's property), voluptuousness (Valentine and Mrs. Frail) are here presented for the first time as ornaments of the male character. From the days of Plautus and Terence, comic plots have frequently turned on money and inheritance, but this is the first major comedy in which a mercenary attitude is struck charmingly by all the principals, as though fortune-hunting were as pretty and pathetic as love. There remains, however, in Valentine's nature something of the Renaissance gentleman, a touch of chivalry and desperate bravado, particularly in the scenes where he simulates madness, that wafts the Mayfair tea-table back onto the battlements of Elsinore and reminds us that Hamlet, too, was the glass of fashion and Mercutio a fop. And insofar as Valentine is a man of parts, his position is that of a latter-day Hamlet. He is the humanist hero surrounded by a swarm of monsters, the nature-monsters of the past, personifications of appetite, and the unnatural monsters of the future, dolls with sand inside them. Scandal, half-doll, half-human, is his Horatio.

But this view of the play is too somber. Valentine's pathos is merely a shadow that life casts for a moment on this art. The truth is that the play is slapstick, and the Hamlet echo is part of the joke, like a Mona Lisa on a moustache. The peculiar quality of *Love for Love* is that it is not comedy in the classic sense, comedy critical of manners and morals, aiming to delight and instruct according to the precepts of Horace, but parody, and parody not of man's work but of God's. Where Shakespeare and Molière, say, hope for correction or improvement, Congreve sees his people as mannerisms of Creation. This *lèse-majesté* is what gives the play its atmosphere of danger, its wonderful headiness and elation. Something of the spirit was inherited by Wilde, but Wilde's parody is too catty; it caricatures experience and then parodies *that*. Congreve makes truth absurd; he is not afraid of the serious. The situation in *Love for Love* is not a construction; it is horrid probability itself. The disinherited heir, the tradesmen with bills at the door, the cold mistress, the false friends, the insensate father, these are no Algys and Gwendolyns and Cicelys—Congreve here, like Beerbohm in his famous Henry James parody, has hit off the style of the Master in His richest and most tragic period. And, as with Beerbohm or any fine parodist, the joke comes with the unexpected withholding of sympathy—a rug is jerked from under the performer in his moment of splendor. This withholding of sympathy (which in Congreve is identical with the absence of censure) ought, one would think, to make the play unpleasant. But in fact it is not so. The author has participated sufficiently in the subject to rise above it in triumphant laughter: mind has eluded matter, and

the play's mirth is a kind of high spirits, as after a narrow escape.

This sense of freedom is a great gift to actors. Congreve, unlike Wilde, has left them something to act. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was, in both senses, too *finished* a play for the stage. There is nothing for the actors to do but read the lines correctly, and Mr. Gielgud, trying to make room for performance, could only add a lean-to of parody to what was already a parody structure, as though the Wilde play had been a naïve effusion like *The Drunkard*. The results were a little wintry, and Mr. Gielgud himself, lacking sportiveness, showed particularly to bad advantage. With the Congreve, everything is different. The play is not closed. The dialogue must be well and stylishly spoken, but beyond that there is a whole field of stage business in which the actors can inventively romp. The contrast, in fact, between the precision of speech and the horse-play of action is the point; physical existence itself is the jest, and the curl of Valentine's wig, the turn of Scandal's neat calf begin that parody of Man that ends in the act of copulation. Anything the actors can be or do, therefore, accrues to the play's interest. Mr. Gielgud's gravity, his sensitive, melancholy profile, here become exquisitely comic—he looks like a tiglon with a heart. And Pamela Brown's acting style, the words dropping measuredly from her lips as from the most refined and expensive eye-dropper, her beauty, the bland, egg-shaped face sliding gracefully down into the long goose neck with no decision of chin interrupting, become an image of the declension of form into the sensual inane. The notion of the human being as a work of art is played on wittily throughout the performance by pantomimic allusions to painting. The poses and gestures appear to come from the conversation-pieces of Zoffany, and the scene when Valentine is found in a Disordered Bed is a plate out of Rowlandson. These continual references to painting not only set the play, visually speaking, in a social world the eye can remember, preserving it thus from abstraction; they also force the spectator into the mood of the connoisseur, a mood, that is, of detachment, to which parody appears not an indignity but the truest compliment to an Author. This production is, in all its details, a buoyant act of perception unique in today's theater.

MARY MCCARTHY

Lenin As Philosopher: History of a Text¹

BERTRAM D. WOLFE

THE FAILURE of the 1905 Revolution in Russia brought on a general retreat from political activity. The greater certitudes of Russian Marxism, its denser body of doctrine and higher degree of extroversion, did not immunize it against the epidemic of self-examination. And because of the international socialist controversy over "revisionism" versus "Marxist orthodoxy," the argument then largely turned on the question: Is it permissible, is it orthodoxy or revisionism, for a Marxist to take any significant ideas from the prevailing fashion of the "neo-Kantian" revival?

This debate had started before the 1905 defeat. In 1900 and 1901, Bulgakov and Berdyaev, two leading Russian neo-Kantians, had broken completely with Marxism and gone over to religion. Whereas the German and Austrian neo-Kantian socialists had fought to retain their places inside the movement and had won recognition as a legitimate tendency, the Russian revisionists soon flung themselves passionately into the path of schism. Bulgakov became a leading theologian of the Orthodox Church, spending the last twenty years of his life (1924-44) as the Director of its Theological Seminary in Paris. Berdyaev developed into one of the outstanding religious writers of our time, preaching a synthesis of socialism, personalism, and corporate Christianity.² In this, as in all things, the superheated atmosphere and intensity of Russian thought made for extremism. German revisionism was a reformist dilution or an apologetic "modernization" of Marxism; Russian revisionism was a heterodoxy, a fanatic schism, a *raskol*. And the impulse of Russian "orthodoxy" was to resort to excommunication.

The year 1904 had marked the hundredth anniversary of the death of Kant. For several years thereafter there was an intense

1. This is an excerpt from *Three Who Made a Revolution*, to be published by the Dial Press.

2. Recently (1946) he has added a dash of Stalinism.

discussion of Kantian ethics and of neo-Kantian epistemology as it figured in modern scientific thought. In this discussion, the acknowledged leader of the forces of orthodox Marxism was Plekhanov. Lenin longed to support him, but refrained at first because he "did not know enough about philosophy" (letter from Siberia to Potresov). Later he was silent for yet another reason: in 1904 he made a bloc with Bogdanov, who was the chief target of Plekhanov's philosophical attack. Lenin had to keep silent thereafter for five years, until he was ready to break the bloc. This enforced and humiliating abstinence explains much of the violent intensity with which he finally expressed himself when the restraint was removed.

It is hard to explain why Plekhanov (and Lenin following in his footsteps), reared as they were in a land where every question tended to be viewed as a question of ethics, should insistently have ignored the ethical aspects of this great controversy on neo-Kantianism. For it was a two-pronged controversy, dealing as much with ethics as with epistemology. To both Plekhanov and Lenin, however, ethics itself was preconscious, as religion is for most men: something which was acquired once and for all in one's youth, or at the moment when one made his decisive choice. Thereafter, rules of personal conduct, relations to others, and moral problems of means and end, were assumed to be settled self-evidently by one's cherished total belief. Socialism was the end which determined and sanctified the means by which it was to be arrived at. The central means was the movement to which one had dedicated one's life. Even to discuss that self-dedication seemed to these men a little "philistine" or in bad taste. Hence Plekhanov, and Lenin after him, ignored the ethical aspect of neo-Kantianism, and limited their contributions to the question of epistemology.

It was not till the period of reaction that the debate on epistemology and Marxism took full possession of the defeated movement. What was left of the Marxist intelligentsia found a measure of distraction and solace in these theoretical pursuits. Though they might seem disparate phenomena, Krassin's ceasing to make bombs in his laboratory and his gradual withdrawal from socialist activity to devote himself to engineering; Riazanov's abandonment of trade union work and of his struggle for party unity, in order to become the greatest Marx scholar and textual critic of his generation; Lunacharsky's growing preoccupation with literature and religion and Bogdanov's with proletarian culture; and Lenin's "shameful neglect of my work on *Proletarii*" in order to immerse himself in philosophy—

are all related symptoms of the deep crisis that had set in within the Social Democratic Party.

At the home of Maxim Gorky on the island of Capri some of the Bolsheviks opposed to Lenin foregathered to set up a training school for Russian workers. It was by Lenin's choice, not theirs, that Gorky's home became an "opposition school" for "ultra-leftist" Bolsheviks. Repeatedly they urged him to become one of its teachers, but he stayed away from Capri for reasons which will appear in the course of this account. The school did not limit itself, as Vladimir Ilyich would have liked, to politics and economics. It dealt with philosophy and natural science, the history of art, the theory of proletarian culture and proletarian "ideological organization," the history of Russian literature, of the Russian State and Church, problems of revolutionary ethics, and, of course, the "leftist tactics" on the Duma boycott and other matters that were being pursued by the bloc built around Bogdanov. Almost insensibly Bogdanov had become a rival to Lenin for the tactical, i.e. the practical political, leadership of the Bolshevik faction. Even if Lenin had not been fighting for his very position as head of his group, still his intense concentration on politics, and on theory only insofar as it had bearing upon immediate problems of practice, would have made him regard this predominantly cultural school with misgiving. To understand the peculiar ambivalence of his attitude toward the values of culture, we need only ponder this revealing anecdote from Gorky's *Days with Lenin*:

One evening Lenin was listening to a sonata by Beethoven . . . and said: "I know nothing greater than the Appassionata . . . I always think with pride: what marvelous things human beings can do! But I can't listen to music too often. It affects your nerves, makes you want to say stupid, nice things, and stroke the heads of people who could create such beauty while living in this vile hell. And you mustn't stroke anyone's head—you might get your hand bitten off. You have to hit them over the head, without any mercy, although our ideal is not to use force against anyone. Hm, hm, our duty is infernally hard. . . ."

Bogdanov had come to Lenin in 1904 at a time when the latter's political fortunes were at their lowest ebb. Lenin had formed his Bolshevik faction only a year earlier (1903) with Plekhanov as its ostensible ideological leader, himself as group organizer, and Krassin as chief lieutenant inside Russia. But by 1904 Vladimir Ilyich had lost Plekhanov to the Mensheviks, had lost control of *Iskra*, and even of the Central Committee. This last, under Krassin's leadership, had

assumed a "conciliatory" attitude toward the former minority, leaving the irreconcilable "majority" leader of yesterday virtually without a faction. It was at this critical moment that Bogdanov and his friends, most of them just released from Siberia, rallied to Lenin's standard. The newcomers were all men with a penchant for cultural and philosophical speculation, a speculation which in no wise resembled the unquestioning Marxist orthodoxy of Vladimir Ilyich. But it was enough for him that they agreed with him on organization and tactics. Almost the only continuity between the original Bolshevik leadership of 1903 and the new Bolshevik leadership of 1904 was provided by Vladimir Ilyich himself and his tactical-organizational views. This phenomenon was to occur again in 1909 (when he broke with Bogdanov) and several times more. Where Lenin and two or three were gathered together, there was Bolshevism.

Bogdanov (real name A. A. Malinovsky) was a medical doctor and a writer of considerable reputation on economics, sociology, natural science, and philosophy. He regarded himself as a Marxist, but his was an independent and speculative mind which abhorred authoritarian attitudes in the realm of thought and rejected the notion that in the scriptures of Marx and Engels would be found the answers to all problems that might be raised by men who lived after them.

Lenin had known Bogdanov by reputation since 1898, when a copy of the latter's *Short Course in Economic Science* reached him in Siberia. Lenin found the work "interesting and sensible," so good in fact that he himself rejected a proposal from a publisher to write a manual of political economy because "it would be difficult to compete with Bogdanov" (letters to his mother, February 12 and June 10, 1898).

When they joined forces in 1904, the two men exchanged presentation copies of their latest works. Lenin's gift was his *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*, and Bogdanov's was the first volume of his *Empiriomonism*. *Empiriomonism*, strongly influenced by the philosophical writings of Ernest Mach, was the work which, in 1909, was to be the chief target of Lenin's philosophical polemic.

Why did he delay for five years before he made his disagreement public? If the work was indeed a service to religion and reaction, as he was later to assert, why did he take its author into leadership in his faction?

One thing is certain: the delay was not because Vladimir Ilyich was slow to read his new associate's book. We have Ilyich's own

word for it (in a letter to Gorky) that he read it at once, at once disagreed with it, and wrote a long letter of private criticism to its author. When the third and final volume of *Empiriomonism* appeared in 1906, Bogdanov sent him a presentation copy from jail. Lenin immediately wrote a further "declaration of love, a little letter on philosophy which took up three notebooks!" (Lenin to Gorky, February 25, 1908). But that did not prevent his forming his bloc with the unrepentant and unconvinced philosopher, nor his maintaining that bloc for five years until it broke up, not on philosophical but on tactical grounds. This is important to establish beyond a cavil, not merely for the light it throws on Lenin as philosopher, but no less for its bearing on the contention of the Leninist epigones that there is a necessary, direct, and inescapable correlation between 100 per cent orthodoxy in Marxist philosophy and the very possibility of being a good revolutionist. The whole of Russian philosophical literature under Stalin is based upon this supposed deduction from Lenin's book. And Leon Trotsky has been no less insistent on this matter in the polemic he conducted during the last year of his life against his American followers, James Burnham and Max Schachtman, when they were breaking with him.

Doubtless it was the prevailing mood of "decadence" in 1908 which contributed to Lenin's desire to reprove his associates publicly for their heterodox philosophy. Yet even then, as he sensed that the Bolshevik tactical bloc might be heading toward a permanent break, he reviewed the whole experiment in a letter to Gorky, and found it right and good. Moreover, he still pleaded for its continuance:

In the summer and autumn of 1904 [he wrote to Gorky in 1908] Bogdanov and I joined each other finally as Bolsheviks, and formed that tacit bloc which tacitly excluded philosophy as neutral ground. The bloc lasted throughout the entire time of the Revolution and gave us the possibility of introducing together into the Revolution those tactics of revolutionary socialism (Bolshevism) which, according to my deepest conviction, were the only correct ones. . . .

A certain amount of conflict among the Bolsheviks on the philosophical question is, I think, unavoidable. But to split on that account would, in my opinion, be stupid. We have formed a bloc for pursuing a given set of tactics in the party. These tactics we have pursued and are pursuing so far without differences (the only differences of opinion were on the boycott of the Third Duma elections . . .). To hamper the cause of carrying out the tactics of

revolutionary Social Democracy in the party because of arguments as to materialism or Machism would, in my opinion, be an unpardonable folly. We must carry on our scrap with each other about philosophy in such a way as not to affect *Proletarii* at all, or the Bolshevik fraction either. . . . You can help . . . (Letter of February 25, 1908).

"In 1903, when I worked with him on *Iskra*," Lenin wrote to Gorky, "Plekhanov analyzed for me the error in Bogdanov's views." Hence it was after the *caveat* of his teacher that Lenin entered into the "tacit bloc" with Bogdanov.

Nor was Plekhanov slow to taunt his philosophical disciple. Your tactics, he wrote of Lenin in *Iskra*, are a revision of Marxism in politics; Bogdanov's theories are a revision of Marxism in philosophy. Since each theory gets the practice it deserves, Machism is the proper philosophy for Bolshevism. You are welcome to your Bogdanov and his Machist philosophy, "and may all possible Machs and Avenarius be with you!" The embarrassed disciple could only pretend not to understand the taunt: "Plekhanov drags in Mach and Avenarius by the hair," he told his followers at the Third (All-Bolshevik) Congress of 1905. "It is absolutely incomprehensible to me what these men, for whom I haven't the slightest sympathy, have to do with the social revolution. They write on individual and social organization of experience, or something of the sort, but really they have no ideas on the democratic dictatorship."

It would carry us too far afield to discuss Mach and his school in the present work. But that last sentence of Lenin's is worth holding onto. If not altogether adequate as a characterization of Mach, it is of Bogdanov's "Machism." "*They write on individual and social organization of experience.*" Those nine words contain a clearer, fairer, more exact account of what Bogdanov had borrowed from Mach's views and assimilated to his own thinking, than Lenin would subsequently give anywhere in all his 400 pages of philosophical polemics, when the bloc with Bogdanov had been broken. In 1905, disagreeing with Bogdanov's views, he knew how to characterize them briefly, honestly, exactly. In 1909, he distorted those views the better to discredit them. Thus was Lenin's clear intellect ever subject to the torsion of his powerful factional passions.

The year 1908 marked the turning point in his relations with Bogdanov. Until that time, Lenin still hoped for a fresh armed uprising, in which case such matters as the boycott of the Duma would be of secondary significance. But the growing reaction now con-

vinced him that these tactical differences were central instead of marginal. Philosophical differences, too, seemed more important in the midst of the general ideological reaction. Lenin became increasingly worried about the tactical bloc "neutral on philosophy."

Bogdanov, Bazarov, and Lunacharsky chose that particular moment to join hands with the Mensheviks, Yushkevich and Valentinov, and other writers, in the publication of a symposium on philosophy. The last straw was the title they chose for their book: *Outlines of the Philosophy of Marxism!* If at least they had not invoked the name of Marx to cover—as Lenin complained to Gorky—"their smuggling of the contraband of neo-Kantianism or Machism." The articles made him "simply mad with indignation . . . Today I read one Empiriocriticist and scold like a fishwife; tomorrow another and curse like a trooper."

Gorky became alarmed for the unity of the faction and urged Lenin to restrain himself. The Petersburg Committee, sensing that Lenin was preparing to use the philosophical controversy as a weapon in the sharpening struggle over tactics, also voted to urge restraint in order to avoid a split.

Once a party man has become convinced that a certain theory is decidedly wrong and harmful [Lenin answered], then he is in duty bound to oppose it. . . .

Plekhanov is entirely in the right against them . . . only he doesn't know, or doesn't want to, or is too lazy to say it concretely, completely, and simply, without frightening the public with philosophical subtleties. And I shall say this in my own fashion, cost what it may. . . .

"Cost what it may!" Yet still he hoped, or so he assured Gorky, that they could continue to maintain the tactical bloc while they had it out in philosophy. But in truth the bloc itself was in a bad way, and Lenin was slowly coming to the conclusion that a split was necessary. In December, 1905, he had let "the Siberians and Caucasians" override him on the Duma question, because it seemed unimportant in the face of imminent armed uprising. In 1907, at the July Conference of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks to consider elections to the Third Duma, 14 out of 15 Bolshevik delegates (all but Lenin!) had been for boycott and they had named Bogdanov instead of Lenin as spokesman for the faction. All through 1908 this nagging conflict smoldered and flared up again. The elections over, it seemed settled, only to reappear in new forms: *otzovism* or "recallism"—the proposal to recall the elected deputies from the Duma as not sufficiently revolutionary; and "ultimatism"—the proposal to present an ultimatum

to the socialist Duma deputies which would force them to resign either from the Duma or the Party. Not till the middle of 1908 did Lenin win a slender majority on tactical questions in Moscow, and not until 1909 in Petersburg.

The group which thwarted him on tactical reconversion from the period of storm to the period of calm were men who had originally been attracted to him by his call for armed uprising and seizure of power. Those formerly big issues had become remote and marginal for Lenin now, while the questions of Duma elections, and practical trade union work, had become urgent and central. His associates were poets like Lunacharsky, philosophers and scientists like Bogdanov and Bazarov, historians like Pokrovsky, novelists like Gorky, romantic revolutionists in politics for whom Lenin's extremism was attractive, "softs" for whom a "hard line" possessed irresistible fascination. When they came to Lenin, he appeared to occupy the extreme red end of the Social Democratic spectrum. Now that, from more somber circumstances, he deduced soberer slogans and devices, shifting his place in the tactical spectrum to match the blue realities of the period, he lost much of his attractiveness and seemed to them unfaithful to "true Bolshevism or Leninism." But Lenin knew that to repeat the same slogans of armed uprising and seizure of power now would be to lose contact with the masses and with reality. Their "true Bolshevism" was to him but a caricature. In this Lenin was wiser than any philosopher, more attuned to social moods than any novelist, poet, or historian in his faction. The time had come, he concluded, to bring his old associates to their senses, or to sweep them aside, lest his group perish from neglect of the real possibilities and the actual tasks immediately before it. Since the independent and self-confident Bogdanov was the leader of the heterogeneous bloc that stood in his way, Bogdanov must be discredited. Perhaps the faction would listen to him on tactics after he had discredited his opponents on the ground of philosophy. He could get off his chest the long suppressed disagreements on philosophical matters; he could strike a blow, albeit a trifle late, for orthodox Marxism against this heterodoxy, and contribute to the counteroffensive against ideological decay and reaction.

While he was turning this over in his mind, new aberrations, not of the professional philosophers, Bogdanov and Bazarov, but of the poetic amateurs, Lunacharsky and Gorky, suddenly put into his hand an excellent stick with which to beat the lot of them and arouse the indignation of the rank and file against them all. Lunacharsky and Gorky were prone to talk in the language of metaphor. Return

to religion was in the air. Sensitive, as creative writers, to all the currents charging the surrounding atmosphere, they now turned their attention to religion, about which the whole intelligentsia had been talking. Not that they proposed to serve religion, as Lenin was to charge against them. Quite the opposite: they sought to fight the recrudescence of religious orthodoxy by borrowing metaphorical weapons from its arsenal for use against it.

In 1908, Lunacharsky published *Religion and Socialism* (the first volume had appeared in 1907). It was a mixture of the history of religion, sociological analysis, and poetic enthusiasm. The second volume culminated in an apotheosis of Marxism as a "natural, earthly, antimetaphysical, scientific, and human religion" which was to put an end to all supernatural, unscientific, fetishistic, authoritarian, hierarchical faiths and substitute the "faith" of man in his socialized self, in his own powers, unity, solidarity. Hitherto God had been a reflection of man's dreams and aspirations projected into an external object of worship. God's omnipotence had been but the reflection of man's potentially unlimited power over nature, once he had socialized his own nature. "Religion is enthusiasm, and without enthusiasm nothing great can be accomplished by man." But Marxism would turn that enthusiasm and faith into their proper channels, from belief in external gods, a belief which humiliates man, into an enthusiasm for and faith in man's own creative powers. The future socialized humanity was the only "god" worthy of man's worship.

Gorky, doubtless influenced by Lunacharsky, next wrote a novel, *The Confession*, which reached its climax in such passages as this: "The people, they are the creators. . . . In them dwells God. . . . I saw the earth, my mother, in space between the stars. . . . And I saw her master, the omnipotent, immortal people . . . and I prayed: *Thou art my God, the creator of all the gods. . . .*"

Lenin's first impulse was to pronounce anathema against the two of them:

A Catholic priest who violates young girls [he wrote to Gorky] is much less dangerous to democracy than are priests who do not wear surplices, priests without vulgar religion, ideological and democratic priests, who preach the creating and construction of little gods. . . .

Yet at bottom he was tolerant of the vagaries of artists and had a deep and abiding affection for the two "little-god creators." Moreover, the real opponent was Bogdanov, free, to be sure, from all

“god-creating” and all metaphorical talk of “faith” and “worship,” but the leading contender in the realm of tactics for the command of his faction.

I am completely and unconditionally of the opinion [he hastened to assure Gorky] that you possess the most unerring judgment in artistic creation and that, when you create such views, both out of your artistic experience and out of philosophy, even if this philosophy is an idealistic one, you may come to conclusions which may be of enormous value to the workers' party. . . .

This respect for the creative freedom of artists and their “unerring judgment in artistic creation” was one of the nobler aspects of Lenin which he never succeeded in handing down to his disciples.

Significantly, when Lenin's book on philosophy appeared, it did not contain one reference to Maxim Gorky. Lunacharsky, however, had some pretensions as philosopher and sociologist. More important, his metaphorical avowals of “religion” and “faith” were a most useful stick with which to beat Bogdanov. Lunacharsky, therefore, appears on the very first page as if he were going to be the central target in the book:

Leaning upon all these supposedly most recent doctrines, our annihilators of dialectic materialism go so far as to speak openly in favor of fideism (in the case of Lunacharsky this is most outspoken, but in this he does not stand alone by any means!).

Since Lenin defines fideism as “putting faith in place of knowledge,” the charge is not true even of Lunacharsky, still less of Bogdanov who deplored the former's coquetry with religious terminology. Moreover, if Lunacharsky is indeed “the most outspoken advocate of fideism,” and fideism is the objective of Lenin's attack, one would expect that somewhere in the 300-odd pages there would be an analysis and refutation of Lunacharsky's views. But nothing of the sort. He is mentioned a dozen times, but always glancingly and ironically, in a series of three names, in order to tie up his “outspoken fideism” with Bogdanov and Bazarov.

Bogdanov pointed out in answer (in *Faith and Science*, 1910) that Lunacharsky had already repented of his religious metaphors by the time Lenin's book appeared. These metaphors of Lunacharsky's, said Bogdanov, could “only hinder the exact scientific analysis of historic religions, which have always been in the first place *authoritarian* . . . and might preserve in the minds of readers remnants of an unconscious respect for notions which ought to be abandoned.” It was all right to criticize such terminology before Lunacharsky had

abandoned it, just as Engels had criticized the similar religious terminology of Feuerbach. But Engels had been careful to expound the real content of Feuerbach's views, and "had not dreamed of confounding those views with actual historical religions, or 'fideism'. . . . Lenin uses a diametrically opposite method with Lunacharsky, obscuring and hiding from the reader the true content of the views of his opponent, to give the reader the idea that Lunacharsky speaks of religion in the usual traditional sense. . . ."

Lenin's authoritarian attitude toward the founders of scientific socialism, Bogdanov continues, caused him to treat similar aberrations in Dietzgen, and profounder ones in Feuerbach, with gentle respect, for had not "the masters themselves" pronounced Dietzgen a "proletarian philosopher" and had not "they themselves" acknowledged Feuerbach as a precursor and teacher? "Rudeness and high-handedness toward people whom one holds lower than one's self in position; respectfulness toward those whom one acknowledges as higher than one's self—is a common feature of *authoritarian* psychology in present day society . . .," concluded Bogdanov (*italics in the original*).

Lenin might be thus rude with Lunacharsky in public, but privately he confided to Krupskaya concerning the target of this attack:

He will return to the party. He is less of an individualist than the other two. He has a highly gifted nature such as is rarely met with. I have a weakness for him. What stupid words—to have a weakness! I am really very fond of him, you know, he is a splendid comrade! There is something of French brilliance about him. His levity is the result of his aestheticism. . . .

At the end of 1908, Vladimir Ilyich's sister, Anna, found a publisher for *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, by *Vladimir Ilyin*, a pen name already known to us—and to the police.

From what you tell me [he wrote to Anna] everything is arranged. Splendid! I am agreed to the tone of my remarks being softened so far as Bazarov and Bogdanov are concerned. As to Yushkevich and Valentinov, it is not worth altering what I have said. . . .

Strange notion, this, that he could keep a comradely tone toward Bolshevik "Machists" and a less comradely one toward Menshevik "Machists"! But on March 19, 1909, as the showdown in the faction nears, he writes: 'Please do not tone down the passages against Bogdanov and Lunacharsky. Our relations with them are completely ruptured. It is not worthwhile to modify the passages. . . .'

Such statements give us the intimate psychobiography of Lenin's

work on philosophy and open a window into the innermost recesses of his temperament and methods of polemics, philosophical as well as political. Indeed, for him philosophy and politics are so closely connected that on April 8, 1909 he writes: "It is *hellishly* important for me that the book should come out at the earliest possible date, not only for literary but also for political reasons." This "hellish importance" derived from the fact that he had called an enlarged conference of the editorial board of *Proletarii* for the end of June. Though this was to be only an "editorial conference," he was secretly planning to place political and organizational matters before it.

At the beginning of May, 1909, the book appeared in Moscow, and from July 4-13, the enlarged Editorial Board of *Proletarii* met in Lenin's apartment. Lenin had prepared all the resolutions and motions. On his proposal, the editorial conference set aside the old Bolshevik Center, elected at the London Congress of 1907, and assumed the power to appoint, remove, and legislate. It decided that "boycottism, recallism, ultimatism, God-construction, and Machism" were all of them "incompatible with membership in the Bolshevik faction." In vain did Bogdanov question the right of a mere editorial conference to remove people appointed by the Bolshevik Center, or to repeal the resolution on "neutrality in philosophy" on which the Bolshevik bloc had been based. In vain did he protest the attempt to split the faction, and the methods of *coup d'état*. The moves had been prepared and thought out to the last detail, and Lenin had the votes to carry his motions. There is no way of knowing how much the big book which nobody had yet had the time to read but which seemed to tie all the "leftists" up with religion and "God-creation," helped to weigh in the scale. By a small but safe majority, Bogdanov and his associates were declared to have "placed themselves outside the faction." "Not outside the Party," Lenin explained precisely. "A party can include a wide range of opinions the extremes of which may even be diametrically opposed to each other. . . ." But in 1912, Lenin's faction was to declare itself the Party! And after 1917 it was to make even the State a mere reflection of that Party. What then would happen to the "wide range of opinions"?

The dissidents, a sizeable minority despite the fact that Lenin had pretty largely determined in advance who should come to the enlarged editorial conference, withdrew at last and proclaimed themselves the only "true Bolsheviks": legally, because they regarded the acts of the conference as a usurpation; ideologically, because in their own minds they were true to the "original tactics of Bolshevism"

which had so often in recent years commanded a majority against Lenin.

Materialism and Empiriocriticism, then, is first of all a document in an intraparty struggle. This should not surprise us, for the same can be said of every line Lenin ever wrote for publication. Its primary concerns are to defend orthodox Marxism against every species of modification, revision, criticism, or attack, and to convict Bogdanov and his associates of deviations from Marxist orthodoxy. But over and above this, the work has a more ambitious aim: to expound afresh the basic philosophical position of Marx and Engels, and to evaluate from its standpoint the main philosophical currents and scientific discoveries of Lenin's day.

Engels had insisted, and now Lenin insisted after him, that the recognition of a world independent of the percipient subject, and the recognition of man's ability through analysis and action to form an ever more exact notion of the nature of that world, are the prerequisites of modern science. To those who assert that there is no such "objective" world, or that it is forever unknowable, Engels answers that science and industry, man's knowledge-in-action, teach us how the unknown becomes known, how out of ignorance arises knowledge. It is this knowledge-in-action which enables us to test the correctness of our conceptions of a given phenomenon, by producing it out of its elements or determinants, by devising critical tests, by predicting or foreseeing, by revising and refining our hypotheses in terms of crucial experiments and observable errors. Many of the best pages in Lenin's book are quotations from Engels, followed by explanations and illustrations of this view. Passionately he asserts that, though the *known* be little and the *unknown* vast, the area of man's knowing and power to predict and plan and control is capable of indefinite enlargement. To postulate an *unknowable*, however, is to set arbitrary, self-degrading limits upon man's efforts to understand and master his world. In the midst of all the antirationalism that surrounded him in the post-1905 reaction, and that surrounds us in our own day, Lenin's plea for a rational, experimental approach to nature and society—however much he may have deviated from it himself in his own dogmatic authoritarianism in the sphere of Marxist orthodoxy—represents an important contribution. "Man's intelligence," he cries, "may be only a feeble rush-light in the darkness of night, but I am not going to let that flickering flame be blown out by mystics and metaphysicians. . . ."

The one chapter of Lenin's book that has meaning beyond the limits of the immediate philosophical-factional controversy is Chapter V, entitled: "The Latest Revolution in Natural Science." Here Lenin handles the "crisis in science" that had just been proclaimed by Poincaré; the notion that "matter is disappearing," or being swallowed up by energy or dissolved into pure mathematical formulae; or that the material universe was dissolving, merely because science was stumbling from one-sidedness of inert matter-without-motion into the contrary one-sidedness of motion-without-anything-which-moves. The approach here employed by Lenin, and more skillfully and subtly by Engels before him, is helpful, too, in considering fresh muddles which have arisen since their day: the supposed entrance of "spirit" into every phenomenon by virtue of the alleged inseparability of the thing-observed from the observer; the emergence of "free will" inside the atom via the principle of indeterminacy; along with other bewilderingments of certain recent scientists turned amateur philosophers and philosophers turned amateur scientists, without sufficient mastery of the accumulated heritage of philosophic and scientific thought.

The weakness of Lenin's work, as Bogdanov hastened to point out, was its authoritarian character. Its proofs are all proofs by authority—the authority of Marx and Engels. The final touchstone is always a quotation from one of their works. The authority, on closer examination, almost always proves to be Engels. Curiously, though Lenin mentions the name of Marx scores of times, there is only one three-sentence quotation from the philosophical writings of Marx in the entire book. To be sure, Engels' more specialized *Anti-Dühring* and *Feuerbach*, if less seminal, are more systematized, more apposite to Lenin's immediate purposes. Still, the neglect of Marx by this orthodox Marxist points to the limitations in his orthodoxy, like the Christianity of a theologian who forever quotes Paul but finds no use for the words of Christ.

When Lenin has succeeded in confronting some quotation from Bogdanov (or from anyone whom he can, by whatever literary stragem, link up with Bogdanov) with some quotation from Engels, and has shown divergence between them, his task is finished. Lenin is not only "authoritarian" himself, but he insists that all his opponents must be authoritarian, too: "Your clamor against argument from authority," he writes, "is only a screen to conceal the fact that you substitute for the socialist authorities—Marx, Engels, Lafargue, Mehring, Kautsky—the bourgeois authorities—Mach, Petzold, Avenarius, and the immanentists."

In pursuance of this idea that every man must have his authorities, Lenin matches a maze of quotations from Engels with a counter-maze of quotations from the "other camp," lumping together the most diverse names, on the philosophical theory, as Bogdanov wryly observed, that "who is not with us, is against us." By this device Lenin blames Bogdanov for things he has not said, and even for things he specifically rejects. It is sufficient that Mach has said them and that Bogdanov is a "Machist" and therefore "responsible" for all of his "authority's" views. And for all other Machists! And for all the utterances of any who has praised Mach or been praised by him! This "philosophical chain-reaction method," and "quotational shock treatment," as Bogdanov dubbed them, were calculated as much to impress the reader as to overwhelm the opponent.

The most notable difference between Engels and Lenin is the angry moral tone of Lenin's attacks, the opprobrious moral epithets that pepper his pages. Engels had spoken of three philosophical "camps": materialism, idealism, and agnosticism. Insensibly, Lenin converts "camps" into "parties" and proclaims that "philosophy is a *partisan* struggle." Where Engels finds "philosophical agnosticism" to be a "shamefaced way of accepting materialism by the back door," Lenin enlarges the "shame" until it becomes a monstrous thing, a plot to drag in not materialism but "religion by the back door." Those in the "idealist camp" are at least to be respected as "open agents of reaction and religion," but those in the "agnostic camp" are to be exposed as covert agents, whose agnosticism is "only a despicable cloak of servility to idealism and fideism."

Marx and Engels could be scornful and ironic in theoretical controversy, and devastating and reckless in their private letters to each other. But even in the *Anti-Dühring*, which so largely served Lenin as source and model, all that Engels aims at is to convict Professor Dühring of inconsistency and "higher nonsense." Nowhere do we find the imputations of evil intention that abound in Lenin's pages, or the passionately held belief that defects in a man's epistemological theories are defects in his character, willful immoralities of the spirit leading to inevitable political sin.

If Lenin's philosophical targets disavow a view he has imputed to them, it is sinister trickery. If they have modified a view under criticism (his criticism or another's), it is but the better to deceive. If their views seem very close to his, or to his masters'—still worse: they are "surreptitiously and illegally borrowing" from materialism

to hide their true intentions and confuse the right-thinking. As a whole, "professors of philosophy are scientific salesmen of theology." Mach and his school are "graduated flunkies of theism." They are all conspirators, plotting against science and the further progress of mankind. "The philosophy of Mach, the scientist, is to science what the kiss of Judas is to Christ."

This method of polemics, and the very epithets employed in it, derive from the intense ethical bias and passionate fanaticism of Russian thought. For reasons suggested in the first chapter of this book, Russian nineteenth-century thought reduced politics to ethics, without so much as a residue of mere practical concern or experimental interest. Art and literature and criticism were no less questions of morality. Even science was a moral creed to live by. "Science," cried the gentle Herzen, "there is no reason why I should hide words in the depth of my soul—Science is Love!" And the problems of epistemology, the most difficult, subtle, and general problems that can engage the thought of mankind, were made into moral issues too. The reader will find Lenin at enormous pains, by the "chain-reaction and quotational shock treatment" methods, to reduce every opponent's views to "solipsism." When he has driven his opponent into that corner, his indignation knows no bounds. As we read, we are reminded of the men of the Russian enlightenment, who, like Belinsky and Herzen, regarded solipsism (extreme subjectivism) as a kind of logical-moral defect of character, arrogant, egotistical, vile. Consistent solipsism, they thought, makes the petty ego of its disciple into the measure of truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil, permitting him to betray all ideals, logically leading him to commit any crime from murder to suicide. When dealing with such issues, there is more to Lenin's scorn than worked up indignation and the desire to discredit his factional opponents (more than his "I shall always act thus whenever a split is involved"). The overtones of anathema and excommunication are part of that Russian polemical heritage.

Materialism and Empiriocriticism appeared too late to have much influence upon the Conference proceedings which expelled Bogdanov and his friends. It was little noticed, little sold, little read. Bogdanov as philosopher was not of large enough caliber to have attracted much general attention. Moreover, by 1909, the entire controversy, epistemological and ethical, was already on the wane. Insofar as the book represented a determined counterthrust against the religious, mystical, soul-searching, antirational moods of post-1905

Russia, it had been delayed too long because of Lenin's "tacit bloc" with the "empiriomonist." It turned out to be a deployment of heavy artillery to a part of the battlefield that had largely been vacated. It is significant that Lenin failed to follow it up, as he had his other large works, with a series of special articles in the press. When Bogdanov answered it in a brief defense (the eighty-page pamphlet, *Vera i nauka*—"Faith and Science"—Moscow, 1910), Lenin did not even trouble to make a rejoinder.

As Lenin had shrewdly suspected, Lunacharsky did but Bogdanov did not return to his camp after the tactical and philosophical controversies had blown over. During the war Bogdanov was an internationalist. After the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, in which he took no part, he attempted to serve the new society by founding and guiding the Proletcult movement. Driven out of this field by the guardians of "orthodoxy," he returned to the medical laboratory and became the founder and director of the Moscow Institute for Blood Transfusion. In 1928 he died as a consequence of a blood transfusion experiment, which, because of his uncertainty as to the outcome, he performed upon his own person.

Lenin's book against him, though it created no stir when it was first published, did acquire considerable importance in the history of contemporary thought after Lenin came to power, and more particularly, after Lenin's death. Then it was published in huge editions, translated into many tongues, studied and cited by zealous disciples all over the world. In Russia it was made a basic text in the training of all intellectuals and party theoreticians. As Lenin had used Engels, so now the Leninists used Lenin: as a sword to slay the lurking dragon of "fideism"; as a "quotational shock treatment and chain reaction" to link up and overwhelm all opposition, dissent, or independent speculation; as a thread to guide the faithful through the labyrinth of modern science and philosophy. Since Lenin's death it has been used as a reagent to test new doctrines in such diverse fields as relativity, psychoanalysis, genetics, electronics, theoretical mathematics. Its exegesis of the philosophical insights of Engels and Marx stands today as a coarsening screen between official Russian Marxist thought and the more flexible, receptive, penetrating thinking of the founders of Marxism. On this exegesis by Lenin has been superimposed an exegesis of the exegesis by Stalin.³ Thus do commen-

3. *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, by Joseph Stalin. First published as Chapter IV of Stalin's *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* and then reprinted as a separate work.

taries upon commentaries upon texts which have become Scripture continue to grow into a body of official state philosophy. Inevitably, where there is orthodoxy there must be heresy. And where the state enforces the orthodoxy, inevitably there must be the burning of heretical writings and autos da fé of the heretics. Not for nothing does purge suggest purification.

Art Chronicle

A SEASON OF ART

THE USUAL ACTIVITY of the New York art season has been punctuated this year by the renewed showing of artists from abroad. After a lapse of five years, the good work that turned up from Europe was, with one or two exceptions, from the old and established masters of modern art. Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Bonnard, Rouault, and Miro were seen either in one-man shows or individual pictures, and there were exhibitions of such lesser luminaries as Berard, Delvaux, Leonid, and Magritte. The Whitney Museum's guest showing of the younger French painters proved disappointing, and a surprise only in the unexpected frankness of its derivations. The canvases of Francis Gruber and Lucien Coutaud suggested that they were more worthy of one-man shows than André Marchand, who was given one. In contrast to his skilled and tasteful compositions, Dubuffet's exhibition struck a new and devil-may-care note that was a relief from too much knowledgeable painting. All this but emphasized that however one may rate contemporary American art in the absolute sense, here, as elsewhere, this country has a more important international burden to carry.

The outstanding group shows were the Museum of Modern Art's *Fourteen Americans* in September, and the annual Whitney exhibition of contemporary painting. To these must be added the Pepsi-Cola show, which through prizes and publicity has taken on an importance not warranted by its quality. Its awards are a beautiful example (not without honor in art reviews), of treating all styles of current painting as if they were equally worthy of attention, picking the best picture in each class and giving it a blue ribbon. This year was no exception; there was something for every style, and the honest preference of the Company, or what the Company thinks the "public wants" was expressed in its calendar, where almost every style was left out. The prize-winning picture—*What Atomic War Will Do to You*—was cleverly chosen for its topicality; itself an aesthetic disaster, it was less effective as propaganda than any war photograph.

The *Fourteen Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art was much criticized on the grounds that no consistent basis for selection—age, or locality, or stylistic direction, or even recent discovery—could be discerned among the chosen artists, whose styles ran all the way from pure

abstraction to extreme expressionism. Yet this was not eclecticism of the Pepsi-Cola variety, even though the purpose of the show was to be representative. Rather it was an interesting confirmation of a tendency recently apparent to balance the objectivity of abstraction with a violence of subject and emotion. There is a growing inclination to shy away from what is by now, due to long exposure, our easy acceptance of the compositional and technical virtuosity of pure abstraction, to embrace an art in which emotion has not been subjugated and uncontrolled feeling breaks through the boundaries of the medium. One tends to say, "So what?" to the beautifully mastered forms of abstraction. Unfair as this is to the individual painter and to many a very fine painting, it is nevertheless a sign of the times. (Just why work which continues an established direction rather than helps to create a new movement should be any the less convincing is difficult to say; yet it appears to be the historical fact.)

This is the effect produced by so many members of the American Abstract Artists group (who also held their annual showing at the Riverside Museum), and by work like that of Rice Pereira and Noguchi among the *Fourteen Americans*. Their pictures appear as bravura technical performances and nothing more, in spite of the undoubted control of space relations in Rice Pereira and the beautiful finish of Noguchi's stone surfaces. Where there has been an attempt to fuse the aesthetics of abstraction with some personal feeling, as in the work of Price and Tobey, the result is delicate, precious, and curiously muted. When this kind of painting was first discovered a few years ago, in the work of Graves, it was hailed with understandable enthusiasm, for here was perception and sensitivity, and concern for the nuances of plastic harmony missing in American painting since the days of Harnett. But a little of this goes a long way, particularly when the mystic is substituted for the microscopic, and the small, instead of remaining a carefully chosen segment of a larger world, whose minuteness is always ironically apparent (as in Klee, who is the final standard for this direction in painting), becomes an important world in itself. Then the subdued velivities are but an escape, and the artist is carefully playing it safe, as in a *New Yorker* short story. (Such painting can now be turned out by a facile second generation, where it lacks even the authenticity of the emotional withdrawal which first produced it, as witness Martinelli and Stamos.)

Against this background one looks for some explosive emotional assertion. It was this willingness to lash out which made the work of Alton Pickens the most impressive of the show, even if not the most pleasing. If he is only rarely successful in projecting his world of violence and destruction and bitter morbidity, at least he is willing to abandon minute perfection, and take a chance. Something of the same cruelty pervades the work of Matta (shown this spring, also at the Museum of

Modern Art among many Europeans, in the *Large Pictures* exhibition). Matta's is a colder cruelty, and at times seems to spring from two deliberate a program but there is power and sweep, as well as spatial bigness that earns admiration. It is surprising that there are not more such paintings; they translate a mood that makes up a large part of our world.

The Whitney Museum annual gave even more prominence to the abstract painters than it had the year before. This represented no conversion on the part of the museum staff, as some artists hopefully suggested, since the show only tries to mirror current activity, nor did it really reflect any great shift in the proportion of "abstract" to "representative" art. It was simply the belated recognition of a very gradual increase in work of an abstract tendency, whose importance had been growing during the preceding five years. Because the ironic result of the American artists' isolation from European influence during the war had been that left to themselves they had grown more "foreign." The proportions of the Whitney show were due to the acceptance of this abstract tendency (using the word in its widest sense) as being as American as any Woodstock landscape. The critics, even those most sympathetic to these developments, generally agreed that the exhibition did not show the "abstract" artists to their best advantage. A great many people on both sides of the fence discovered that there could be degrees of intensity, meaning, and compositional coherence, in short, of value, within the field of abstract painting; and a good many others realized that the belated admission of the movement to full and equal standing did not automatically encompass the salvation of American painting. Perhaps, indeed, it came too late, at a time when the values of abstraction need to be taken for granted in an attempt to achieve something beyond them.

The Whitney show also demonstrated something else about the state of American art at the moment. Its level has undoubtedly risen within the last ten years. But there are at the present time no absolutely outstanding talents whose style always proves its superiority to its fellows. One of the striking pictures at the Whitney was Jackson Pollock's large vertical panel. His one-man show, and his mural in the *Large Pictures* exhibition at the Modern Museum confirmed what he had demonstrated in the past, that he is a forceful designer of intense color and continuously rhythmic forms. Yet one would wish him to go on from there to something more specific. The same can be said of Mark Rothko, who showed up much better in his own exhibition than at the Whitney. In his fluid forms there is somehow a refusal to come to grips with a particular vision, to be willing to exclude certain effects in order to be more positive about others. Perhaps this asks too much, for such generalized emotion is indicative of the lack of specific purpose and audience of art today. Its presence is a sign of life and vitality, and is certainly preferable to the Indian patterns of a Gottlieb or the Miro-derived forms of a Gorki.

Indeed there are numerous signs that the day of primitive inspiration, like the day of pure abstraction, is rapidly drawing to a close. The many artists who recently have tried to draw upon the designs of the Northwest Coast have been able to do little to infuse their source material (handsome as it is) with any contemporary meaning.

Of the other abstractionists who have had shows this season the most important were Rice Pereira, whose work has been mentioned above, Virginia Admiral, Motherwell, Baziotes, and Ralston Crawford. Among these, the most distinguished is Baziotes, because he avoids the fluidity of the group just discussed, and the cold, and sometimes empty, calculations of the others, and combines a nicety in the understanding of color and the close relationship of planes with an intensity and single-mindedness. It is perhaps revealing in this context that his forms, stylized though they are, are unmistakable human symbols.

Coming from the other direction, Esteban Francés and Leon Kelly have infused the precision in representation of their surrealist heritage with a new note of formal subtlety. Of the two, Kelly is the more sensitive, and one can hope that he will not feel it incumbent upon him, out of respect for his ancestors, to continue to execute his mutilated nudes, and will instead go on with his studies upon floral and bird themes.

The shows of Kantor and Avery raise in two different ways one of the general problems in American art: Why is it that so many of our artists, having reached a certain stature, fail to continue in growth and achievement, or even to sustain the level they have reached? It is pleasant to record that Kantor, after several years of unfruitful labor, appears to be making what in other circles is known as a comeback. The Avery show confirmed the impression of the previous year, that success and sales have stretched his talent, always more charming than forceful or original, a bit too thin. One compares these two men, not only with European examples, but with such a painter as Tamayo, whose exhibition this winter again demonstrated a consistent growth and sense of his own style.

Sculpture has been suffering a revival. A most curious phenomenon was the almost complete acceptance by all shades of taste of the English sculptor Henry Moore in his beautifully installed exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Usually conservative critics, who as a rule complain of the Picassoids in painting, welcomed this sculpture, so clearly of the school of the master, with open arms. Their enthusiasm was comparable to the reception of the abstract artists by the Whitney.

In the sculpture annual at the Whitney, the general level was much lower than in the painting, and the only really impressive work was by Lipchitz. It was a bold and open statement by an artist who is no longer worried by the hampering restrictions of good taste, even if that taste is eminently modern. The same cannot be said of David Hare or David Smith, both of whom had one-man shows this season. Hare's arrange-

ments are of the abstract-surrealist school, and though they are well composed, they are anaemic. For all their sexual subject matter, and their unsubtle reference, they lack a plain, honest lustiness of spirit to match their themes. A little common vulgarity would improve their cleverness. An overrefined wit also disturbs one's enjoyment of Smith's reliefs. His compositions, though they are done in wire in the most modern manner, are similar to the illusionistic relief space of Hellenistic art, and the rather obscure allegorical references of his subjects match this form. Smith's imagination is a fertile one, and his sense of design sound; but one wonders if his use of wire is not a fetish of the moment, as indirect a way of stating his sense of atmospheric relief as his allegories are of stating his themes. Also worthy of mention among the younger sculptors is Helen Phillips, a newcomer to the East, who showed a small group of subtly composed bronzes.

This partial summary of the season would be altogether incomplete without some mention of its most important single event: the suspension, in mid-career, of the two State Department traveling exhibitions. These shows, seen here as a unit in the fall at the Metropolitan Museum (the Museum's one contribution to contemporary art, including its Mestrovic exhibition), were stopped at Prague and Cuba as a result of pressure from the Hearst press, which poured upon them all the shopworn, but apparently still effective, old epithets. The only encouraging aspect of this affair was the unanimous protest of all artists and critics without regard for personal opinion of the individual works. How much weight their voices will carry is another matter.

ROBERT GOLDWATER

Books

ROMANTIC POETS, OLD AND NEW

THE POETS at hand*—from Blake in Stephen Spender's anthology to Dunstan Thompson—have three themes in common: Love, Death, and the Dream. Taken together, these themes usually produce a romantic poem, and these are Romantic poets.

Mr. Spender still speaks of ruins and visions. For the poet the real world is always in ruin, ruining away from meaning and personality. The poet's calling is to create a Dream or Vision—another order of reality, immortal, pure, desperately dedicated to Ideals, having only an imperfect relation to the real world, yet finally somehow legislating upon it. As anthologist, Spender has chosen those poems of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Darley, Beddoes, Tennyson, and Emily Brontë which create the Romantic Dream. His general intention is to give us what according to his own definition are the most romantic poems of the Romantics. It is strictly a personal and polemical anthology, and a very engaging one. But I wish that Spender had stressed not the super- or extranaturalism and the antihistoricism of the Romantic poets, as he has done in his preface, but their naturalism and their historicism—and not the "purity" of their poetry but its psychological profundity. A revival of Romantic poetry at this time seems to me a very good thing, if only because it would reassert the value of personality in our dehumanized culture, the Promethean task which no poetry since the Romantic movement has been able to accomplish. (There is one horrifying thing about T. S. Eliot's brilliant literary credo: if we consider a finished poem as something absolutely apart from its creator, we have lost a major criterion for distinguishing it from the other products of the machine society.) But remembering the long disappointment and collapse of taste which followed the Romantics, we ought to be sure on what grounds we are proceeding.

* A CHOICE OF ENGLISH ROMANTIC POETRY. *Ed. by Stephen Spender. Dial.* \$4.00.
POEMS OF DEDICATION. *By Stephen Spender. Random House.* \$2.00.
THE NIGHT LOVES US. *By Louis Adeane. The Delphic Press.* 3s.
GREEN SONG AND OTHER POEMS. *By Edith Sitwell. View Editions, Vanguard.* \$3.
LOVE POEMS. *By George Barker. Dial.* \$2.00.
POEMS BY SAMUEL GREENBERG. *Ed. by Holden and McManis. Holt.* \$3.00
LAMENT FOR THE SLEEPWALKER. *By Dunstan Thompson. Dodd, Mead.* \$2.50.

As a poet, Spender is admirable and courageous but only occasionally, in *Poems of Dedication*, really first rate. He is inhibited or uncertain when he most needs to be in full swing. And so his poems tend to be incompletely fulfilled, even the moving "Elegy for Margaret," which is the most ambitious poem in the book. One section of his book Spender calls "Spiritual Explorations" and the whole volume is really a candid exploration of some of the enduring problems which had a special appeal for the Romantics. At the bedside of the dying Margaret he reflects upon the "dreams of life painted by dying desire." Like the dead among savages, she is already becoming a myth before the eyes of those who watch her. Does she exist in "the whispering scratching existence almost lost / To our blatant life"? Or among "the granite facts around your bed / Poverty-stricken hopeless ugliness / Of the fact . . ."? And the poet's grief is similarly ambiguous. Is it fact or dream? The tough mind will regard it as a dream, which will be gone tomorrow. And then, more generally, the appropriation of the Universal Desert by the Loving Ego: the "deprived fanatic lover" who must somehow "cover" "the sexless body in the sands." For it is Love in which the "moons and tides move" and which unites "the angel and the devil . . . in the atrocious night." It may be that the Loving Ego is now what the "Imagination" was to Wordsworth and Coleridge.

In the fine poem called "Lost," Spender searches for the lost "shining" of childhood—exactly what Wordsworth called the "gleam." Which reminds us that the tendency of psychoanalysis is generally in favor of Romantic poetry. In Spender's "Explorations" the given fact is the Dream of Venus and Mars, who dream of the Ego in its flight through the desert night of stars—this Ego which dreams of its own journey and of loved objects; and recapitulates History in its "shut skull"; and hears the still, sad music of humanity—

*The Universe, the dead, humanity, fill
Each world-wide generation with the sigh
Which breathes the music of their will—*

and is "the ill / Chameleonic harlequin who'll die." Better, for a fact, to be Spender's harlequin than merely to complain, with Shelley, "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"

But Shelley is a man of the hour. Mr. Louis Adeane, whose competent sheaf of minor poems celebrates the mysteries of sex, death, and rebirth, speaks of the "insurgent freedom of the heart" and asks "If love's two fires are ash can summer come?" When he speaks of a German airman shot down over England, he does so in the manner which for most of the new poets under review constitutes Romanticism:

*We shot him down.
His sky blasted, vision wasted,
Hunger stinted, love and birth
Stunted. From a high dream of leisure
We brought him back to earth.*

Edith Sitwell's poems are also about Love, Death, and the Dream, but her transcendent power in this late volume gives her poetry an appalling topicality. She deals with those basic rhythms of life and the universe which, Toynbee says, overwhelm and obsess the unhappy souls of a dying society. The death-wish of the world works itself out in an infinite number of repetitive rhythms of which the master rhythm is the series of identical unsuccessful responses made by a disintegrating civilization to the single invincible challenge of the Adversary. Let's say, in shorthand, that in Miss Sitwell's world, man responds with a will-to-Power or Sex or Love to the challenge of mechanized war or Death. Like the poet who wrote: "the thing that hath been is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done," Miss Sitwell writes:

*All is the same:
The heroes marched like waves upon the shore:
Their great horizons, and the kiss
Of lovers, and of atoms, end in this . . .*

*O bitter love, O Death that came
To steal all that I own.*

Death is "the world's last love" and it speaks with numberless rhythms, "the fly-like whispering of small hopes, small fears / The gossips of mean Death—gadflies and gnats . . ." Neurosis turns in upon itself:

*And the lost men, the rejected of life, who tend wounds
That life has made as if they were a new sunrise . . .*

In the poem called "Lo, this is she that was the world's desire" (which makes Miss Sitwell nearly the equal of Yeats in describing old age), there is the full horror of reversion:

*. . . and none may know
Seeing the ancient wrinkled shadow-shape
If this be long-dead Venus, or the Ape

Our great precursor. . . .*

Miss Sitwell's poems have a primordial simplicity of thought and image. The heart, she says, is better than the head, and "the world ends in the heart." The sun is the heart of the universe. The sun is the Patriarch (the "Abraham-bearded sun, the father of all things") and the sun is Christ ("He with the bright hair"). The images are often like those in folktales: a dead King in golden armor somewhere in a dark wood; the beast-philosopher hiding in the orchards. The long incantatory lines of these poems are a ritual celebration of the *élan* which smashes the death-pattern, or, in the imagery Miss Sitwell shares with Shelley and Eliot, which will bring the Spring back to the long Winter of the world or will bring the young god back to the field of golden grain. Several of the individual poems in this volume are great successes; taken together, they form a single poem of the first order.

It was clear from Mr. George Barker's *Selected Poems* (Macmillan 1941) that he was a considerable poet and that his kinship was with Romanticism. The assertion made by his new volume is that the Loving Ego unites all things in its Dream. It unites "the angel and the anthropoid"; it bridges the seas and encompasses the universe; it insists upon Personality, sets up a realm of Being opposed to temporal "Justice," and distinguishes individuals from the faceless total society (the theme of an earlier poem by Barker in which the poet has a vision of Wordsworth walking in a modern crowd).

The detonation of Barker's new love poems is sometimes hugely incommensurate with the results. There are moments of great energy and a certain felicitous weirdness:

*My tall dead wives with knives in their breasts
Gaze at me, I am guilty, as they roll
Like derelicts in my tempests,
Baring their innocence to the dirty pole
Whirled upon which I am a world at rest.*

But then he will give the reader a whole series of deplorable thoughts by rhyming "intervenes" with "between us" or speaking of the "dove, in its code of coos." And it will occur to the reader that Barker seems unable to distinguish between nonsense like "where swans elide the labials of waters" and the genuine kinetic impulse of "Time with its shoving shall unsmooth / The brightest lying lover." Barker's fluency, however hard-won it may or may not be, often leaves an impression of haste and carelessness. He benefits by publishing selected poems. And to me the barbaric music and thick-forested imagery of earlier pieces like "The Amazons" and "Holy Poems" appear to be his best style.

The poems of Samuel Greenberg, who was born in Vienna and died of protracted tuberculosis in a Staten Island hospital in 1917 at

the age of 23, are chiefly interesting as language. It isn't surprising that some of Greenberg's best passages are about death. "The dream of Samuel is death" he says of the prophet, punning on his own name; and the sense of reversion is well handled in certain isolated lines:

*When color and form were but a mist
And shadow but the whole,
We may as well turn round again
From all our wayward thrall.*

Greenberg wrote in a kind of *lingua franca*, a curious, illogical product of the vast folk-wandering of which he was a part. His language has little to do, I should say, with that of his fathers; it is a strange mixture of Romantic-poetic cliché (which he got from books like Palgrave's *Treasury*) and the American language he heard in New York. His poems often have a rich textural quality, but only occasionally is anything accurately denoted or connoted. Greenberg's language—what he called his "conquering script"—was in fact one of the forces which alienated him from life. And it serves to remind us that even for more fortunate writers, art can be a Circe's song calling the wanderer-among-cultures to a final isolation.

Dunstan Thompson, 29, graduate of Harvard, author of two volumes of verse, is back from the long wars. *Lament for the Sleepwalker* is about war—England in the war years is the setting of several of the poems. He does not step easily and with early maturity upon the world scene, like the British poets: Sidney, Byron, Auden, Spender, Barker. His world is a boy's world; it brings to mind the magazine one used to read, *The American Boy*. War is a matter of blood and iron all right. But the only *people* in Mr. Thompson's war are boys, "their pockets rammed with pistols." The central image is a young god with an argosy of bright hair. As a somewhat different symbol he was well known to Melville and Whitman, "this sad / Faced, grave eyed, beautiful as steel / Young man, his sex a star . . ." The young god is the Friend, whose friendship is probably false ("the hero as friend" is "stranger than fiction"); he will slit your throat or pick your purse at the drop of a hat, especially if you impugn his "good looks." The Young Man is the beginning and the end. He is Death and Life-in-Death. He is, perhaps, Life: this tall

*Young man, this blond young man, his mother's joy
Must kill her first, his father next. He shall ride
To the top of the hill where three thieves died.*

The young man is endlessly theatrical. If the world is not audience to

his "fakery" (Mr. Thompson's word for poetry), then he is his own audience: he is very often surrounded by "mocks and mirrors." Sometimes he is a lonely and lost boy trying to attract attention with his cleverness; sometimes he is a sort of broken-down prince or damask duke strongly reminiscent of John Barrymore in the last phase. The emotions in these poems are jealousy, loneliness, the sense of injured vanity, the suspicion (shared by Miss Dorothy Parker and all children above the age of one) that to love is to be betrayed. Thompson's style at its worst is razzle-dazzle, swank, and an apocalypse, or at least a slug of desperate gin, in every line.

But at its best Thompson's style has positive dash and splendor. He can manage a grave elegiac tone with severe skill: see "The Moment of the Rose" and the sonnets to his dead father. Thompson is potentially a first-rate poet, and that is why one's feelings about him are so contradictory. He inspires the greatest contempt and exasperation and sadness; but then one feels admiration, sympathy, and belief. But he is no Byron, not yet at least. For the American poet who steps upon the world scene it seems to be still a long, long struggle to transcend perversity, heartlessness, and meaningless violence.

RICHARD CHASE

"TO SO LITTLE SPACE"

FABULOUS VOYAGER: JAMES JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*. By Richard M. Kain. University of Chicago. \$4.

THE PORTABLE JAMES JOYCE. With an introduction and notes by Harry Levin. Viking. \$2.50.

JAMES JOYCE: THE LAST JOURNEY. By Leon Edel. Gotham Book Mart, New York. \$2.50.

AT LAST Joyce has achieved the embalming chambers of the graduate schools, and the event can only leave some of us with a rather mixed state of feeling. Of course one refers to those of a certain age, whose life-span has coincided with Joyce's own rise from almost universal scorn and neglect to something rapidly approaching apotheosis; who perhaps read the *Portrait* in high school underneath the teacher's nose, who hoard among their possessions the musty red-covered issue of the *Little Review* in which the first episode of *Ulysses* appeared in 1918, and who welcomed each installment of the *Wake* like another leaf from the great tree Ygdrasil. It would be in the worst possible taste to speak more particularly of the fortunate ones who glimpsed the darkly linear figure at the Voltaire or in the Rue de l'Odeon or even heard him burst into an aria of Rossini or a half-dozen lyrics from "Chamber Music."

At all costs one must avoid the personal and the nostalgic; Joyce himself would have despised it. The point is that Joyce was for so many of the young people of his time not just another writer—to be discussed, annotated, evaluated. He was of course the grand archetype of the literary genius in the modern age—that went without question. There was no doubt that one day he would be given the honors of the podium and the seminar. It was simply that he supplied, both in the richness and the increasing dimensions of his work and in the example of his life, the most compelling image of greatness anywhere on the scene. Not Yeats, not Valery, exerted quite the same spell; none equaled the uninterrupted *purity* of his example.

And now it is possible for the brighter young people in American universities to write their Ph.D. theses on Joyce. This is more than gratifying; it gives fresh hope for the future of higher education in this country. Actually there is no statement in Mr. Kain's study that it was originally designed as a thesis. However, despite the unorthodox exuberance of the style in places, it adopts most of the methods and devices of that form of composition. You will find a map of Dublin on the inside cover, illustrations of various places in that city which figure in Joyce's work, and a resumé of all the more important news items of June 16, 1904, as culled by Mr. Kain from the back files of the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Dublin Evening Telegraph*. This is exhumation of the most laudable sort. Then there are the four appendices, which occupy a large part of the study. Appendix A is entitled "The Temperament, Personality, and Opinions of Leopold Bloom," and includes page-references to his "taste in food," "scientific curiosity," "sensuality," among other traits. Never in recent literary scholarship has such a complete autopsy been performed on a fictional character. There follows a biographical dictionary of 133 of the more important characters in *Ulysses*; and this is perhaps the most useful of the labors expended in the study. Least absorbing to most people will be the lengthy "directory of shops, offices, public buildings, professional, and civic personages." The final appendix, an index of the verbal motifs associated with both Bloom and Dedalus, is the least original and satisfying, although most ambitious. This approach was first made many years ago in an untranslated study by Ernst R. Curtius, whose name appears nowhere in the present text. Like other members of the neo-academic group of scholars, including Mr. Harry Levin, Mr. Kain is unconcerned about sources; there is, for example, no bibliography; and the few references to Stuart Gilbert's pioneer study of *Ulysses*, from which he has appropriated only less than everything, are of the sneering variety.

Briefly, as may be guessed, the volume includes a great deal of useful materials and will certainly be a help to future writers on Joyce. It would be caviling to declare that as a piece of interpretation it includes little that is new, if Mr. Kain did not insist so much on his originality. Of

course the perfect book about Joyce will never be written by one person; the best criticism of his work is scattered in a hundred magazines in several languages. For one thing, no writer enforces such great humility; and that particular virtue is not popular with the neo-academic group. Like Mark Schorer in writing about Blake, Mr. Kain makes much ado about the "social element" in Joyce, although one had supposed that too self-evident to require much comment. But a more fundamental objection is the kind of pervasive feebleness, uncertainty, and immaturity, both of sensibility and judgment, reflected everywhere in the style. Here is part of his summation of Stephen: "Stephen thus represents the barrenness of a skeptical intellectualism. Believing in nothing, lacking any positive faith in a world that has retained only the shreds and husks of outworn beliefs, he can contribute nothing to society. . . . Art for art's sake soon becomes art for myself." This might have been written by any of the "social" critics of the thirties. Or, take the closing sentences of the whole study: "By the very scope of its indictment and the bleakness of its atmosphere, the novel constitutes a most powerful challenge to commercialism, vulgarity, ignorance, prejudice, and inertia. *Ulysses* is a modern *Hamlet*; but it is a *Hamlet* without the last three acts."

From a purely material point of view the *Portable Joyce* is a considerable bargain; and it is a convenience to have so much of Joyce's work within two boards. Perhaps we would have sacrificed *Exiles* and even some of the stories of *Dubliners* for more of *Ulysses*. Moreover, why the "Nestor" episode from the latter was favored over the much richer "Proteus" is puzzling, and also the omission of the "Circe" episode—in the opinion of most critics, the most powerful in the work. More disturbing than the selections (which are on the whole excellent) are Mr. Levin's introduction and notes. Although there are some good observations in the former, it is debilitated throughout by what Mr. Levin admits is "an ambivalent state of mind." One feels that this critic would enjoy greater peace of mind if he could decide whether he really cares very much about literature at all. In the meantime he writes too often like someone trying to make an honest woman out of modern literature for the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Of Leon Edel's little book it may be said that it is the kind of thing rarely done well in English, and almost never in this country—a memoir which is also the record of a high moment of personal experience on the part of the writer, written with great feeling but without sentimentality, as nearly flawless as this kind of writing can be. Edel, an American officer in Switzerland in 1945, visited Joyce's family, reconstructed with their help his final flight into exile, the details of his sickness, and his funeral rites. At his grave outside of Zurich Edel writes, "And here, in Switzerland, far from the Shannon and the Liffey, under the mountain snow, lay that once elegant figure, the ironic alchemist of words. It was

difficult to believe that so great a man could be reduced to so little space."

And may one suggest that Mr. Edel's last sentence might serve as a salutary motto for all future students of Joyce and his work?

WILLIAM TROY

FICTION CHRONICLE

BEND SINISTER. By *Vladimir Nabokov*. Holt. \$2.75.

THE CONFESSIONS OF ZENO. By *Italo Svevo*. New Directions. \$3.40.

THREE SHORT NOVELS. By *Vercors*. Little, Brown. \$2.00.

AS A SCHOOLBOY the dictator, Paduk, has a moment of secondhand popularity with his fellow pupils. Paduk's father has invented an instrument called a padograph, a typewriter which reproduces the writer's script with all its curlicues and evidence of personal temperament. Such an invention appeals to the childish mind because it is both novel and full of mischievous possibilities; one can have his own padograph made and dash off a mechanical imitation of a personal letter, but, at the same time, the existence of such an instrument means that one is no longer in sole possession of his own handwriting since pranksters can forge one's padograph and fill the mails with false love notes, embarrassing documents and fraudulent claims of all sorts. That Paduk should control his father's invention and should for a time dazzle and confuse everyone with his priority provides one of the most successful and entertaining uses of symbolism in Vladimir Nabokov's new novel *Bend Sinister*. The book itself is a kind of padograph, as historical and factual as one's script and yet purposefully offered as a literary invention, a fantasy.

Bend Sinister, if it is not quite the great book we await on totalitarianism, rather cleverly offers a reason for our failure to produce such a great book, or for that matter any significant art on this theme. Perhaps the totalitarian truth of the Hitler and Stalin governments is, when translated into art, unconvincing, farcically exaggerated beyond belief and purpose. The anti-Nazi movies are a good example: they did not succeed in becoming tragedies, as I assume they were meant to be, because the evil Nazis were not convincing. Nazi brutality was insane and artistically unmotivated and therefore the struggle against it became melodrama, which from our immediate point of view may be the only possible approach. (One can sympathize with the refugees, each of whom had a tale to tell that should have struck the listener dumb; but even these tremendous experiences became "escape" stories since the Soviet and fascist

states offered only two heroic possibilities: escape or death.) The trouble with setting a fictional hero against the totalitarian state is that one has given him an inhuman nightmare for an opponent; the hero is understandable as a human being, but to be worthy of a tragic conflict the villain must also be understandable. One must have those sudden and frightening sympathies with him, as with Milton's Satan, a secret desire for the evil the conscious mind condemns. For that reason the only people who could find our anti-Nazi art entirely convincing are those who have a submerged area of corresponding brutality which informs them that these wild and savage acts are credible; to anyone else the stories, in spite of the dreadful fact that they are a close approximation of the truth, go too far and seem fabricated, another bad Hollywood dream. (Here I mean to talk only about fictions. In life the political motivation of dictatorship and the practical meanings of its terror and murder are all too real.) Perhaps later generations, with their right to falsify historical truth, can succeed in making the conflict between a lonely, free intellect and the ruthless state, if not an equal contest, at least a thoroughly human drama.

Nabokov's plot, though his use of it is entirely different, is very much like a movie scenario in which these modern horror devices—the knock of the police, the leer of the government representative, the demand for identification papers—are our present equivalent of trap doors, mustache disguises and ghostly voices from the wings. The hero, Adam Krug, is an internationally famous philosopher who must be made to support the dictatorship in order to give it prestige abroad. The government's "seduction" scenes are often close to farce. Krug's friends are arrested, in a wonderful Chaplinesque interview he is offered the presidency of the university in exchange for a friendly public statement, a sexy nurse is sent to tempt him; none of these is successful and it becomes necessary to torture and murder Krug's son. The state finally gets its great philosopher, but only after it has driven him insane.

Nabokov uses this material in a highly original way. If I understand correctly the complicated presentation of the book, he is saying that political terror is so cheaply theatrical the artist can present it only as a fantasy. In his book we see the novelist inventing the story, standing aside from it from time to time, wondering if a certain scene has been overdone, occasionally questioning the incredible melodrama he has produced. The incidents are offered as a deliberate fictionalization, but the reader's knowledge of recent history adds that they are also a fact. This final irony gives the book its real strength.

The foregoing outline of *Bend Sinister* suggests very little of its literary quality, which is in many ways extraordinary. Nabokov's style is not wholly felicitous for fiction and at times his descriptive passages are, to quote James, "a succession of forced assaults upon the impregnable stronghold of painting." On the other hand he has the linguistic fa-

cility, intellectuality, and gift for symbolic situation that make him, on a small scale to be sure, one of the few writers who can, without too much faking, use many of Joyce's innovations. The book is filled with stunning moments, notably an excellent, satirical, pseudo-Marxist interpretation of *Hamlet* in which Fortinbras is the hero.

It is pleasing to have a sophisticated work of literature in which the serious writer, naturally unable to forget the haunting existence of Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Surrealism, and modern poetry, isn't in his creative work the palsied victim of his own necessary knowledge.

Italo Svevo's *The Confessions of Zeno*, happily reprinted by New Directions, is a reckless, spontaneous work, best described by Zeno's own words when he says he is in a "mood for improvisation." It goes, as a confession or diary should, right to the self and whips along like an inspired monologue. This book, written in 1923 by Ettore Schmitz under the pseudonym of Svevo, is a wonderful and profound comedy about a feverish, narcissistic, little neurotic, Zeno, who alternates between spasms of uncontrollable buffoonery and hopeless self-torment. Zeno's life, in the absence of any mysterious events, is really quite dull, a situation that seems more faithful to the neurotic pattern than are the extraordinary adventures usually found in psychoanalytic fiction. Zeno is lazy and bored; he suffers from hypochondria; he devotes himself to such purposes as giving up cigarettes in order, by this process of self-discipline, merely to pass the time.

The confessions are supposedly written under the advice of a psychoanalyst, but they do not turn out to be a clear, simple case history. Zeno is real because *everything* is wrong with him and, at the same time, he suffers from nothing. He has a romantic nature but cannot fall in love; he has nothing to do, being rich and incompetent, and yet he is always busy, either trying to win a wife he doesn't want or seducing a mistress who doesn't satisfy him or going into business for which he has no aptitude. And, as an intelligent neurotic, the extremity of Zeno's interest in himself forces upon him an interest in everyone else. This interest is not altruistic; it is the cynical, observant eye necessary to a man bent upon his own salvation.

Zeno, as the introduction by Renato Poggioli indicates, is a perfect product of bourgeois life; he has plenty of time for himself and enough education to be fascinated by his own ambiguities; in addition nothing he does is completely disastrous because he has the true bourgeois safety, which means that if he makes a fool of himself no one will think the worse of him for it. In fact this slippery character is looked upon as a model husband, which he may very well be since his passions are constantly checked by neurotic weariness.

Zeno's life is a chain of wrong guesses. He goes into a respectable

household, intent upon marrying the pretty daughter, but marries instead the ugly one who makes him a good wife. (It doesn't make any difference which daughter he marries since he is only abstractly in need of a wife. And the wrong marriage is really the right one, because the situation allows him to pretend that he is still in love with the pretty daughter who rejected him.) His frantic sexuality grows upon idleness and leads him to a mistress, Carla, who is badly in need of money. Zeno has money but his ironic sense of finance and love prevents him from offering it to his mistress *naturally* and she is forced into a marriage which separates them.

The book, superficially a medical account, is really a fine novel because Zeno does not analyze himself in a vacuum, but always in terms of each situation. He is not presented as a tragic figure mimicking some ancient and mythical fixation, but as an everyday neurotic who goes to his in-laws for dinner and bears children who make no changes at all in his life. One of the best sections is called "A Business Partnership." This adventure is high comedy because Zeno's temperament is possible only to the clumsy, unambitious son of a rich man; but business has a fascination for Zeno who has lived from its fruits but does not understand it. He loves the doors marked "private" and delights in selling a few old packing boxes or in buying the office furniture. "But when are you going to begin to make money?" his wife asks, and Zeno responds wittily by businesslike poses of "taking stock of the market." The business is a failure because Zeno's brother-in-law with whom he has entered into a partnership is an extrovert who begins to play the market and gets so much in debt he has to commit suicide.

There is a problem about the interpretation of *The Confessions of Zeno*. In the end Zeno announces himself cured, not by psychoanalysis, but by his recognition that pain and love are essential afflictions of mankind. In an epilogue he seems to offer a theoretical condemnation of psychoanalysis by doubting the possibility of perfect health. However, the prologue is a grimly triumphant note by the analyst who says that Zeno in attacking psychoanalysis has merely proved his need of it. This irony leaves us just about where we are today; both the patient and the doctor are covered.

The quality of Svevo's book is utterly unlike the second-rate, Gothic, psychoanalytical fiction we are used to these days. Svevo, perhaps because he came to psychoanalysis without our accumulated glibness, has had the genius to preserve the commonplace and trivial in the lives of neurotics. His novel is much gayer than the others of its type and it is also, in the end, much more pessimistic and disturbing.

Not having read anything by Vercors I found myself expecting much more than I received from his new volume of short stories. Ver-

cors is attracted by certain concrete moral situations which accompanied the downfall of France. His purposes as a writer appear to be topical and didactic, but he seems to work with the suspicion that his style is not as fine as his morality. Humbly, he measures out in perfect weights his portions of dialogue and description, thought and action, comment and suggestion. The result is a competent and dreary imitation of good French literature.

ELIZABETH HARDWICK

A MODERN PLAGUE

LA PESTE. *Par Albert Camus. Librairie Gallimard (Paris 1947).*

“WHEN A WAR breaks out, people say: ‘It can’t last; it’s too stupid.’ There is no question about it: war is certainly too stupid, but that does not prevent it from lasting. Stupidity always clings to its point; people would be aware of this if only they weren’t constantly thinking of themselves. In this regard our fellow-citizens were like everyone else, they thought of themselves, in other words they were humanists, that is

to say that they did not believe in scourges. A scourge goes beyond the human scale and consequently people say that it is unreal, that it's a bad dream that will soon be over. But it isn't always over right away and from one bad dream to another men themselves are finished instead, and the humanists to begin with because they didn't take any precautions. Our fellow-citizens were not any more guilty than anyone else; they simply forgot to be modest and they thought that scourges were impossible. They kept on doing business as usual, they planned trips and they had opinions. How could they have thought of the plague which suppresses the future, and travel, and discussions? They thought they were free and no one will ever be free so long as there are scourges." When Albert Camus makes these remarks early in his new novel, *La Peste*, it should be at once apparent, even if it were not earlier, that his subject transcends an imaginary plague isolating the Algerian city of Oran from the rest of the world.

"On the morning of April 16th," the narrative begins after an introductory chapter, "Dr. Bernard Rieux came out of his office and stumbled on a dead rat on the stair landing." We all had such significant warnings in the years preceding 1939, but like the good doctor we kicked the rat aside and went about our serious business. As the number of dead rats began rapidly multiplying within our city we too started worrying, as he did. And when the plague was upon us in all its horror, we sprang into action and did what we could.

To French readers in 1947 this vividly depicted plague in Oran will surely seem a parable for the enemy occupation of France from 1940 to 1944. The same problems are evident here: the common suffering of all, the pain of separation from loved ones, the formation of isolation camps, the restrictive laws and hardships in obtaining the necessities of life, the being cut off from the outside world, the search for a cause to these sufferings, the effort of some to escape and their illegal dealings with a band of outlaws, the tendency of others to consider themselves outside the common lot, the spontaneous organization of all able-bodied men to combat the plague, the black market, the people's faith in prophecies, the exhortations of the radio from outside countries, etc. Camus shows brilliantly by examples how a scourge of this kind undermines all moral and intellectual life, absorbing every activity of the mind and body.

But there is a larger implication here, broader than the allegory of France's momentary fate, more general even than the whole recent war. The basic problem, as in his first novel *The Stranger*, is a philosophical one which is dear to Albert Camus: that of our common responsibility in this life and our inability to escape the *condition humaine*. No matter how absurd or meaningless that fate may be, we still must accept it and play our role. No one can take refuge in the fact that he doesn't belong here (Rambert), or in a permanent attitude of ironic de-

tachment (the old sufferer from asthma who took to his bed twenty-five years ago and claims that he alone knows how to live), or in the belief that God has planned everything in life with a purpose (the priest Paneloux), or in an attitude of complete moral anarchy (Cottard), or in the refuge of art (Grand), or in a certainty of one's own superiority (the state's attorney Othon). One of the characters, the philosophical Tarrou, reflects that all humanity can be divided into two categories, the scourges and the victims. There must be another category, he adds, formed of the real doctors—but there are not many of them. Putting himself deliberately among the victims, he is striving toward the third category through sympathy. Maybe someday he can become "a saint without God."

Right after the liberation of Paris some of us began to be aware of a vigorous new personality in French journalism: the chief editorialist of *Combat*, whom everyone in Paris identified as the young Albert Camus, born in Algiers in 1913. His name was already known by one novel, *L'Etranger*, two plays, and a philosophical essay entitled *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, all devoted to expounding the notion of the absurdity of life and illustrating the problem of human freedom. His essay was written directly against philosophical existentialism but because he had read Heidegger, Husserl, and Kierkegaard and because he knew Sartre

he was confused with Sartre. *La Peste* should go a long way toward clearing up this misunderstanding.

A better novel than *The Stranger*, *The Plague* (as it will doubtless be called in English) benefits from the fact that its narrator, who is no less lucid than the earlier one, is much more articulate. Hence the universality of his struggle should be more immediately apparent.

There is great variety in this prose: the two sermons by the Jesuit priest are worthy to be compared with the brilliant one in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*; at another point we have a passage that is reminiscent of Proust and, again, a satiric description of various types of bureaucrats of which Anatole France would not have been ashamed. Few will now be able to contest the fact that Camus is already one of France's major novelists and a *moraliste* in her best tradition.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

DIONYSUS AS RATIONALIST

THE PORTABLE LAWRENCE. Edited by Diana Trilling. Viking. \$2.00.

THE STRIKING THING about D. H. Lawrence is that with his limitless energy he drives everything up out of the depths. His method of writing is to provide a bright, durable, and variegated surface, which he burnishes and hammers into heat and light. Images of light and incandescence abound in all of Lawrence's writing. He is, almost, a neo-classical writer; he has the same relentless impulse to push everything up to the surface that we feel in Swift or Voltaire. It is a great style, as Mrs. Trilling says, though sometimes we wish that the surface were less relentlessly maintained and that Lawrence would let us down easily into the depths by saying something dim or obscure.

This surface quality perhaps contributes as much to our current neglect of Lawrence as do the other factors Mrs. Trilling lists in her introduction—his intemperate tone; his emotional excess, so often incommensurate with the subject at hand; his apparently total rejection of the Christian-democratic ethos; his sometimes irresponsible politics; his cruelty. Most of the best modern writing is in one way or another symbolic; we are accustomed to look for exfoliations and levels of meaning, for multiplicities of reference. But in Lawrence's best writing there is really only one level that counts for very much. And when he tries for large symbolic effects, as in *The Plumed Serpent*, the whole thing collapses miserably of its own oppressive deadweight.

True, much of Lawrence's fiction is constructed around characters whom we can easily trace back to Lawrence's father, or his mother, or himself in relation to them. Or his characters can be shown to represent the forces of his own emotional conflicts. But that is not to say that his

characters are symbolic in the sense that Stephen Dedalus symbolizes the Son or Leopold Bloom the Father. In fact the whole intention of Lawrence's thought is to abolish both the Son and the Father by reconciling them in what he calls the one true Absolute, the Holy Ghost. He hates Hamlet for being "creeping" and "unclean"; he thinks that the meek Jesus is a great imposture. He admires the "Father and the King"; he respects Pride and the aristocratic principle. But ultimately these latter represent the ascendancy of the Ego and the Will and are as morally dangerous as the image of the crucified Son. Away with Father and Son, then: let us worship the Holy Ghost—which "we call Truth or Justice or Right" or "mystic Reason." Lawrence, we see, is a genuine child of Enlightenment. When he says, "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect," we feel, not that Lawrence is a deep and mysterious man, but that, as we often say of the neoclassical writers, he is merely being guilty of a piece of inadequate psychology. It may be true that, as Lawrence says of himself, he "saw a tragedy in every cow," but so did Swift, at least in every horse.

There is much monotony and much bad writing in Lawrence's works. He benefits amazingly by such an intelligent and painstaking selection as Mrs. Trilling's. The short stories—"Tickets, Please," "Two Blue Birds," "The Rocking-Horse Winner," "The Fox," and so on—are expertly contrived and solidly dramatized pieces, not at all sermons in sex or anything of the sort. Of the novels Mrs. Trilling gives us parts of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. And there are some of Lawrence's poems, some travel pieces, letters, book reviews, and essays—"Pornography and Obscenity," for example; a review of books by Dos Passos and Hemingway, and the chapter on Poe from the brilliant *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Lawrence was a supple and various writer, a fact which Mrs. Trilling's *Portable* wisely brings out.

Anyone who remembers Lawrence only as the Dionysus of the advanced ladies of New Mexico or as the prophet of apocalypse or of uplift through improved copulation will be surprised to discover that he was first of all a very capable artist and a man of sharp intelligence.

R. C.

Variety

The Archangel's Correspondent

IF FOR A MOMENT all men may be divided into those with the character of fathers and those with the character of sons, no one familiar with Paul Rosenfeld will be in doubt where to place him. Alternately as enthusiastic and self-reproachful as a sensitive undergraduate, until his last day he retained a kind of filial status. Women were charmed by him; strangers took to him; he was still boyishly warm and open-hearted at the age of fifty-six. This may have contributed to the sense of exceptional bereavement felt by his colleagues on the startling occasion of his death. In addition to sentiments of shock and grief, there may also have been an identification of themselves with him. Do not most artists of the rebellious avant-garde give the impression of being Sons? When a new Ulysses is born, is he not instantly claimed by Mars or Mercury, while Apollo must get along with Telemachus? Certainly this theme has been repeated often enough in the characteristic literary works of our time. Is it not possible that a real artist-patriarch can only be produced in a time of relative harmony between the individual and society, under conditions that obviously do not exist today? Or is this a question of type and character, anterior to conditions?

In any case, it is unmistakably a Son we discuss in Paul Rosenfeld. Let us not however expect any more of our modest metaphor. Its purpose will have been served if it guides us to what I consider the central fact about him, his credo of defenselessness. For this actor played Telemachus with such romantic singleness of mind that he spurned all props that might have come from the classic theater of the patriarchs—systematic training, technical discipline, calculated effect, hard reasoning—and conceived his performance in dash and inspiration alone. In this he resembled many poets who have also made a code of helpless immaturity, willing to cede shrewd, manipulative crafts to their blood enemies the journalists, if only they themselves might be the occasional instruments of the timeless, rather than the regular recorders of the day. It is significant that one of our most distinguished poets, Marianne Moore, placing numerous examples of his verbal skill in evidence, has claimed Paul Rosenfeld as in spirit a practitioner of her own art; it must be observed, however, that he did not write in verse, but since his greatest stimulation seemed to come from art-objects, in critical prose, and thus subjected himself to an entirely different kind of judgment.

No evaluation of his works will be attempted in this brief note. He

has been praised generally for his pioneer labors with *The Seven Arts*, *The Dial*, and *The American Caravan*, as well as for being among the first to encourage many young talents that later proved their worth; but there have been serious reservations about his writing. Often the objection is made that next to a piece of exceptional insight and felicity will stand another that is unbelievably maladroit. I do not deny it. Some readers enjoy him; others fling down his books in annoyance. I myself have had both experiences. Certain critics find his intentions more praiseworthy than his accomplishment, and say that he will be best remembered for his generous enthusiasms in the service of fellow-artists of

his day, particularly in the field of music, with perhaps a few of his best pages finding their way into our literary record. Others say that in writing of music he should have striven less to produce a prose music of his own, and recognized the limitations of words. Such judgments, though useful, are in danger of forgetting that his mistakes, which had a way of calling attention to themselves, were inevitable in view of his method—or somewhat intentional lack of method—which put so much emphasis upon the reception of impressions and so little upon their effective reproduction.

Let us stop trying to place him, therefore, and begin to try to understand him. However useful it may seem to maintaining a librarian orderliness in our minds, placing artists in a sense a parvenu trick and altogether too prevalent among even the most secure and independent of our intelligentsia. It was natural enough that Paul Rosenfeld, trustful inheritor of a Transcendentalist belief in man's infinite capacities, who came of age in the hopeful year 1911 when young Americans looked forward to almost limitless progress in politics and art, should make a credo of defenselessness. He was that kind of young man and he was living in that kind of day. He would be a wax disc on which the wondrous earth would record its secret music. His life strategy would be to be unstrategic. To him there was nothing remarkable in such a choice of career; it was simply a

matter of doing what he liked, since he had an inheritance of five thousand dollars a year. He liked works of art, especially those of his contemporaries; he would live among them, he would encourage them, he would write about them. That would be his life.

A great many other young men have wished for such a life, and regretted lacking the money to make it possible. For their benefit let it be recorded that this one, after considerable early productivity and reputation, did not work out as planned; even given such a headstart on his difficulties, with the means to keep economically abreast of them, Paul Rosenfeld lost his life-race. No one who knew him well could pretend that he won, in any justifiable use of the word. In later days he talked continually of his "failure," and every attempt to remind him of his accomplishments was sorrowfully rejected. (Meanwhile his income had shrunk considerably; the carefree *rentier* was prey to economic anxiety.) Much neighborly association with him at that period convinces me that this state of mind contributed to the physical condition to which he finally yielded.

He had failed, however, in his own eyes and by self-comparison with the best. With typical romanticism, innocent of the shrewdness that most artists summon to avoid facing really high standards, he had permitted himself no other scale of self-measurement, and when he grew older and his intellectual perceptions deepened and turned in upon himself, youthful

reliance upon his rich senses and intrepid intuitions being at last challenged by the sober self-criticism of middle age, he reached the literally mortifying conclusion that he had fallen short of his masters. In such a condition he brushed aside any reminders of his actual accomplishments, which seemed nothing to him then. Nor would he consider capitalizing his position as chief prophet of the new American music which a lucky constellation of radio, films, ballet, theater, and patriotism had presented with an exploitable windfall. It was also useless to recall to him the environmental odds against him—a dwindling audience for impressionist criticism, as well as a general lack of art-seriousness and a growing politicalization of thought and

emotion—since according to his nineteenth-century code of self-reliance he should have been more than equal to any and all antagonists. It was evident at this period that he believed that “if only he had been a better artist,” he would have triumphantly mastered all difficulties; the theme, in one form or another, was never long absent from his talk. A psychiatrist might have found that he died of a sense of guilt, not a heart attack—and because he believed he had not been worthy of the mighty critical standards of Sainte-Beuve and Schumann!

It is unnecessary to point out that if other writers were to set themselves such standards, our obituary pages would be full and our best magazines empty. But of course there is no danger of that. Under such a perfectionist handicap, disaster could only have been averted by the sternest kind of realignment of the man to himself and his environment, a realignment that rarely takes place, that the Son finds almost impossible. When under the grimmest battering he bloodily achieves it, he is certain to be in primary relation to Nature; if he is a critic, dependent for stimulation upon the work of others, he cannot do it—or, if he does, he becomes in effect a kind of philosopher, dealing directly with life rather than with life through art-objects.

Exceptionally thin-skinned and tender-minded, Paul Rosenfeld was by no means the kind of Son to endure such solitary arctic trials. The inclination of the wishful, ar-

dent “boy in the sun” ran, on the contrary, toward fantasies of cultural brotherhood, such as those expressed hopefully in *Port of New York* and certain of his early writings on American music—longings that he abandoned later in bitter disillusionment when the sharpened demands of his maturing intellect dissatisfied him with some of his erstwhile heroes. It was also during this middle-aged period that he complained repeatedly: “What was I doing at college?” or “I don’t know the ABCs of philosophy!” or “Would you believe it, I’m just now learning what Plato was all about!” (Under a mental strain that might have led to a complete breakdown, he had embarked courageously upon an ambitious study of literary forms which involved a strenuous re-education in historical thought. The once self-indulgent impressionist, at an age when most writers are content to repeat themselves, was striving to master a new and uncongenial intellectual technique, to write less rhapsodically, to correct the errors of his youth.) His self-criticisms of this period were directed, I believe, not only at his training but at his temperament, at the very depths of his character. They were uttered with a despair that I did not appreciate at the time, although I recall my horror when he said, apropos of something else, but in a similar tone, that he had stopped playing the piano, which had formerly been his indispensable companion. In my preoccupation with my own difficulties and in my conventional efforts to cheer him I did not per-

mit myself to realize fully that I was witness to a tragedy.

This is a painful account to give of so springlike a nature. To confine myself thus to the last act of his drama is like forgetting the rose-field and thinking only of the autumn frost for which it is always unprepared. This man loved beauty with rare devotion. One of the most gifted correspondents ever accredited to our cultural front, he has left behind an authentic record of our worst-reported war; his very errors, as typical of his school, will interest the historian, and certain of his pages are good enough for any reader. His clearer-headed successors in the advance-guard will do well to beware excessive self-

congratulation on the incontestable superiority of their more scientific methods. Scientific criticism has also its booby-traps, demanding extraordinary imagination and character to escape the snares of the New Academy. Few real literary personalities emerge from it, and it seems to rely too often on mere application of good methods, as if the subjective issue could be ducked. At least the claim can be made for Paul Rosenfeld that he was, on occasion, as Miss Moore says, a poet.

"Whom do I write for?" he once asked. "For the Archangel Gabriel!"

No remark he ever made to me was more characteristic. He believed quite simply that he had observed such wonders on the earth, especially in the handiwork of his companions, that his account of them must be addressed directly—air mail, special delivery, as it were—to the highest echelons in Heaven.

GERALD SYKES

Remarks On a Best Seller

THE FOUNTAINHEAD, published in 1943, has already sold something like 350,000 copies and has been on the "best seller" list for three or four years. This, in itself, is no excuse for its extended treatment here. It has simply enjoyed the success shared by other bad novels which are 754 pages long and boast of heroines with long legs and high breasts. But there are

other facts about the popularity of Ayn Rand's novel which give it a sociological if not a literary significance and make it the kind of novel, to quote an advertisement, "that becomes an active force shaping the lives of its readers."

Unlike its popular counterparts, this novel was not launched with the noise and lights we have now come to expect whenever a new and sultry hussy is about to set forth on her erotic adventures. Apparently the book achieved its reputation through genuine reader response. Ayn Rand writes in an open letter to "every reader who had the intelligence to understand *The Fountainhead*, the integrity to like it and the courage to speak about it," that twelve publishers rejected the manuscript on the grounds that it was "too intellectual" and "too unconventional." But Ayn Rand's readers proselytized for her, spreading her message over the land, and even though Bobbs-Merrill has not stinted in advertising the novel, it belongs very definitely to the category of books that people thrust into their friends' hands with the air of evangelists dispensing religious tracts.

When we realize that the protagonist of *The Fountainhead* is not Forever Amber but a man, an architect, and a philosopher, its success becomes all the more remarkable. It is true that Miss Rand makes real concessions to the slicks. The hero, Howard Roark, has magnificent muscles and orange hair and rapes the heroine, Dominique Francon, with considerable aplomb.

But he is also given to philosophizing about the fit and the unfit, functional architecture, and "integrity." In fact many of the characters in *The Fountainhead* are great talkers, and despite the violence and lust and sadism and masochism glowing fitfully through hundreds of murky pages, *The Fountainhead*, compared to *The Manatee* or *The Turquoise*, is an intellectual book. It is built around an idea. It carries a message.

If we follow the main lines of the story and ignore the seductive byways, the plot is roughly this. Howard Roark (for Roark read "the male principle," "the creative urge," Individualism, Thoreau, Frank Lloyd Wright, Carlyle, William Graham Sumner, Alexis Carrel, Tom Girdler, Priapus) is fired out of the Stanton Institute of Technology because his ideas about architecture don't happen to jibe with the administration's. Like most solipsists Roark is a little hard to deal with, but the reader knows from the beginning that no misfortune can make a dent on his flinty personality. He cuts through the obstacles of authority, institutions, society, convention as easily as Superman, to whom he bears an esoteric relationship, and sustained by Nature and by a high-powered unabashed ego, he ultimately achieves an unsought-for success. Indeed Roark is so omnipotent, his unblushing indifference to the most formidable barriers is so colossal, that Miss Rand must work very hard to set up counterforces which will even temporarily stall her juggernaut.

Roark has to face the swinishness of the masses, the tastelessness of the vulgar, but the most dangerous heresy he strives to extirpate is something Ayn Rand calls "collectivism," a protean word respectively identified with "the common good," altruism, planning, democracy, humanitarianism, Russia, Germany, housing projects, social workers, and mass imbecility. The collectivists hate men who make \$40 a week or over, independent artists, Nature, functional architecture. Their spokesman in *The Fountainhead* and Roark's only respectable antagonist is Ellsworth Toohey, a diabolical newspaper columnist and art critic who conspires to paralyze society by preaching the vicious doctrine of self-abnegation and by deliberately enshrining mediocrity. Toohey pulls down genius, exalts the "second-handers" (Miss Rand's term for timid, second-rate group-men), and almost perverts America with his gospel of sentimental altruism.

It looks at first as if Roark is going to be sucked into this humanitarian bog. Like Frank Lloyd Wright, whose ideas Miss Rand misconstrues and perverts, Roark serves his apprenticeship with some one meant to suggest Louis Sullivan and then begins his slow ascent to notoriety. Somewhere between page one and page 754 his spiritual and physical complement, Dominique, marries several times—first to a second-hander architect and then to a Hearstian publisher—while Roark builds buildings that aren't appreciated. Toward the end

of the novel he finds out that the plans for his housing project have been tampered with by the second-handers, that they have added features of their own to the clean symmetry of his original designs. His response is as simple as his architectural principles. He blows up the uncompleted constructions.

At the trial Roark explains to the jury that his action was necessary and inevitable. And it is at this point that Roark makes the statement which Miss Rand tells us is the key to *The Fountainhead*: "I wished to come here and say that I am a man who does not exist for others. It had to be said. The world is perishing from an orgy of self-sacrificing." The true creator, he argues before a remarkably receptive jury, serves no one. He lives for himself. He simply responds to self-generative primal forces. A man can be either a parasitical borrower or an independent creator. "All that which proceeds from man's independent ego is good. All that which proceeds from man's dependence upon men is evil." It is the creator, Roark continues, who denies, opposes, persecutes, and exploits. "The only good which men can do to one another and the only statement of their proper relationship is—Hands off!" America, "the noblest country in the history of men," was erected on that principle, not "on selfless service, sacrifice, renunciation, or any precept of altruism. It was based on a man's right to the pursuit of happiness . . . a private, personal, selfish motive. Look at

the results." The jury hardly bothers to deliberate. Not guilty, the foreman says.

Lest the point of the book be missed by her fans, Miss Rand explains in her letter that she is offering "a new code of ethics," a "morality of individualism." What it amounts to is a kind of watered-down existentialism: don't live through other people. The Great Heresy may be seen in the squashy submissiveness of Dominique's first husband, Peter Keating, and in the power-loving spirit of her second, the arrogant publisher, Gail Wynand. The equilibrium is maintained in the unsullied egoism of Roark who neither seeks to repress his ego for the sake of the herd, nor to live through the herd by ruling it.

So much for the philosophy of *The Fountainhead*. One can only guess whether Miss Rand's reflections helped to sell her book or whether her insights were submergèd by the glamour of Dominique's boudoir and the long descriptions of "frozen music" that read like the program notes of Olin Downes. Part of its appeal must lie in its charm for young readers obsessed by thoughts of their own identities; they can respond, perhaps, to its vision of power and sex, to its particular brand of romantic anarchism, shot through with an equally spurious idealism, which inspire dormitory bull-sessions and stimulate adolescent reveries.

And yet this dreary and vulgar equivalent of Carlyle or Nietzsche

is symptomatic of certain post-war attitudes that have become more sharply outlined in the last few years. It is indiscriminately anticollectivist, antidemocratic, antihumanitarian. Howard Roark's challenge to the bureaucrats and the system-makers—"I don't work with collectives. I don't consult. I don't co-operate. I don't collaborate"—becomes in this novel more than a cry against authoritarianism; it is a glorification of the solitary Titans, a polemic against the collaborating, co-operating masses. This is the book that thousands of readers, many of them of the more literate variety, have found inspiring. It is significant, if not portentous, that a woman like Ayn Rand can write a best seller in which the word "collectivism" is distorted beyond all recognition and "democracy" becomes another name for vulgarity, stupidity, and viciousness.

DANIEL AARON